

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC
ABUSE AND ALCOHOL:
SAME HELL, DIFFERENT DEVILS

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Abstract

Research into domestic abuse and alcohol use has been dominated by a focus on associations between male perpetrator's drinking and physical violence, neglecting issues of power and control. Minimal space has been given to enabling women's voices to be heard.

This study explored the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use, by not only focusing on alcohol use defined as problematic, but by examining its role in the everyday lives of abused women, and how their experiences were shaped by a gender differentiated society. It was therefore critical to study women's alcohol use as potentially normal, pleasurable, a constructive and autonomous response to their lives as they balanced multiple risks against each other.

A Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) approach deployed the visual method of Photovoice with seven women survivors of domestic abuse in Scotland. Participant generated photographs were used to facilitate dialogue across multiple group sessions. Views of ten stakeholders, working in related fields, were also collected by semi-structured interviews.

Combining Johnson's (2008) typology of domestic violence with Stark's (2007) framework of coercive control, created a feminist lens through which a nuanced understanding of the complexity of domestic abuse could be revealed. This enabled new insights in relation to not only how women understood, managed and negotiated the use of alcohol within this intimate context, but how gendered societal discourses intersected with those experiences. Telling a different story of domestic abuse and alcohol, one that moves away from the violence paradigm, revealed a new perspective that uncovered the complex and often contradictory discourses which women must negotiate in their roles as women, partners and mothers in the context of domestic abuse. These discourses were found to contribute to women's entrapment, owing to their invisibility and general acceptance as the 'wallpaper' that constitutes the backdrop to women's lives.

Keywords: domestic abuse, alcohol, coercive control, gender, Photovoice

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction and context for the research

“I have just interviewed a woman survivor of domestic abuse for my undergraduate dissertation research and I look forward to enjoying a glass of wine when I get home. As I walk down the street I am emotional. Of all the horrors she described experiencing in her life I find myself especially saddened by how her attempts to find some relief, solace and a miniscule of pleasure in a few glasses of wine had been hijacked by her abusive husband and turned into yet another tool for control and abuse that almost destroyed her. How can that be?” (Julie Young, research diary, unpublished, February 2013)

The idea for this thesis arose from that moment and the question that would not leave me. The thesis is based on a qualitative sociological study, using visual methods, which examined how women survivors of domestic abuse in Scotland experienced their own use of alcohol in the context of an abusive intimate relationship. This chapter introduces the primary aims, context and rationale for the study. It also offers an overview of the whole thesis to assist navigation of the remaining chapters.

Main research question and specific aims

Research aim

This study aimed to examine the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use by not only considering where alcohol use has been defined as abusive or problematic, but by looking at the part played by alcohol in the everyday lives of abused women. Inclusion of a perspective that regards women’s drinking as normal and pleasurable, a rational choice within the context of their particular material and social situations, was vital to the research. It was therefore essential to study women’s alcohol use as a constructive and autonomous response to their lives as they balanced multiple

risks against each other, a particularly important consideration in relation to domestic abuse where autonomy may be severely compromised. A qualitative account was used, taking a gendered approach to the realities of women's use of alcohol. Locating women's drinking within the context of their everyday lives enabled an examination of how these experiences were shaped by a gender differentiated society: how the gendered construction of alcohol use impacted upon their lived experience.

The aim of the research was addressed by investigating the following research questions:

- How do women negotiate their alcohol use during and beyond their experiences of domestic abuse?
- What narratives do women construct in relation to their alcohol use in the context of experiencing domestic abuse?
- What can Feminist Participatory Action Research contribute to understanding the intersection of alcohol and domestic abuse and the generation of positive change from a survivor's perspective?

The research questions outlined above reflect the original focus of the PhD study at the start of the project. The emphasis, identified as a gap in the literature, aimed to provide an opportunity for women's voices to be heard about the role alcohol played for them in the context of experiencing domestic abuse. Equally, a main argument of this thesis was always that we must first understand that context. Respecting the participatory principles of this research, and honouring what the women participants identified as important, the balance of the thesis emphasises the complexities of the abusive context. As a result, testimony on alcohol use took a secondary position, and many of the narratives explored in this thesis arise from that broader lived experience of abuse. I argue that this in no way diminishes the importance of any component; more critically, it privileges participants' voices and their priorities.

Telling a different story

The Scottish Government demonstrates a strong commitment to the recognition of, and steps to address, domestic abuse as a major social problem. Although police statistics in Scotland recorded 59,882 incidents in 2014-2015 (79% being female victims of male perpetrators, where gender was recorded) it is also recognised that many women do not report to the police partly because the abuse may not be physical and may not be considered to constitute a crime (Scottish Government 2015a). It has been argued that Scotland demonstrates a progressive policy approach to domestic abuse by operating from a gender based definition that recognizes gender inequality as both a cause and a consequence of abuse (Orr 2007). Current policy in Scotland focuses on aims to tackle domestic abuse as part of the 'Equally Safe' strategy for preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls, recognising the need for them to thrive as equal citizens and be equally safe and respected (Scottish Government 2014).

From an alcohol perspective, in twenty first century Scotland, there exists a commonplace attitude that consumption of alcohol is a part of the Scottish way of life and readily accepted to the extent that a stigma is attached to abstinence (Bromley and Ormston 2005). Scottish culture is characterised by heavy alcohol consumption to such an extent that alcohol misuse is accepted as normal with drinking considered a part of everyday experience (Gilchrist et al. 2014). Equally, it is often noted that as a nation we are drinking too much. The 2014 Scottish Health Survey found that nearly 1 in 4 men (23%) and around 1 in 6 (17%) women drink at harmful or hazardous levels (defined as men drinking more than 21 units per week and women drinking more than 14 units per week).(Scottish Government 2015b). While the Scottish Government (2009a) recognises the integral part alcohol plays in Scottish life, it also calls for lasting social and cultural change to address its harmful effects by changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol. Outlining this 'framework for action' it makes an ongoing commitment to legislative changes related to licensing, alcohol sales, advertising and tackling public violence, while at the same time claiming to take a whole population approach to rebalance our individual and national relationship with alcohol. This is framed in terms of maximising our potential as individuals and communities.

More generally alcohol abuse and domestic violence have a shared history of being framed as private problems to be dealt with from within the family. During the twentieth century attitudes to alcohol shifted in and out of public and private domains, partly as a backlash to earlier temperance approaches and changes in the boundaries of personal privacy (Room et al. 2010). Societal recognition of domestic violence as a public problem has also been revolutionised in the last forty years. Political activism of the women's movement, where the personal became political, resulted in a proliferation of refuge shelters, policy changes, advocacy services and international recognition of domestic abuse as a human rights issue.

Statistics are useful for indicating prevalence and influencing policy and many statistics could be presented in relation to the damaging effects of alcohol on Scottish society. I choose not to, as this thesis is not about statistics, it is about women's lived experience and part of the aim is to shift the focus from a perspective that views women's alcohol use only in negative terms. Furthermore, statistics only tell a partial story and one that fails to capture complexity. This thesis is a story, primarily one of domestic abuse, comprising multiple women's stories; stories of lived experience, the complexity of that lived experience that incorporates stories of alcohol. In exploring these stories this research aims to contribute to a call to change the public story of domestic abuse. More than three decades of feminist activism and research into the phenomenon of domestic abuse has been highly successful in the provision of support services, improved policy and criminal justice responses and increased public awareness (Dobash and Dobash 1998, Stark 2007). However, Stark (2007) has argued that this revolution has now stalled and we need to tell a different story. Despite the images of physical violence and victimisation that lay at the heart of this revolution, and served it well, some feminist researchers in this field now problematise this public story.

Prioritising physical violence means that only those experiencing it recognise themselves as abused and therefore worthy of support. Furthermore, it frames the questions we ask as researchers and practitioners. The current public story of domestic abuse is one of primarily physical violence, but is also one in which gender norms influence the image of what a perpetrator or survivor looks like (Donovan and Hester 2014). This story also fails to capture the complexity of the picture. Women

have been telling agencies that it is the abuses that cannot be seen that are most difficult to deal with, so it is time to change this story (Williamson 2010). The way that most media stories focus on the victim and not the abuser has also been problematised. The victim is either celebrated for having the courage to leave or is blamed for staying, either way she is constructed as being responsible for ending the abuse (Berns 2009). A new approach, one that emphasises not violence but rather control, and recognises the entrapment of women in personal life is required. Women often fail to recognise their experiences of coercion and control meaning that their lived reality has no public audience; they have no way to give it a voice (Stark 2007). One of the main purposes of this study was to provide space for that voice.

The importance of naming is well recognised and its political dimensions in relation to domestic abuse are explored in the next chapter but it is worth noting the conventions I will deploy in this thesis. The literature relating to alcohol use employs a range of terms and definitions (e.g. alcohol dependency, binge drinking, alcohol abuse, alcohol misuse, negative drinking) each indicating some measure of problematic use. Unless citing specific studies using their terminology, or quoting participants, the term 'alcohol use' is employed in this thesis. A similar approach will be taken regarding the domestic abuse literature. Variations in terminology are less clearly defined and can be culturally specific (e.g. domestic violence, battering, intimate partner violence). The term domestic abuse is adopted in this study as it incorporates a range of physical, mental and/or sexual violence perpetrated by a partner, or ex-partner, and is characterised by a pattern of coercive control (Scottish Government 2009b). It does not include consideration of child abuse or wider family relationships involved in abuse. However, alternative terms may be used in this thesis when discussing the work of other authors.

There is acknowledgement of an intersection between alcohol and domestic abuse that recognises a complex relationship (Mcmurran and Gilchrist 2008; Galvani 2010a; Peralta et al. 2010). Research and theory have tended to categorise two possible relationships; alcohol's role in the perpetration of physical violence and alcohol's role in the experiencing of that violence (Galvani and Toft 2015). For example, victims of domestic abuse have been shown, in an Australian study, to be much more likely to have alcohol problems than women who are not (Loxton et al.

2006). A meta-analysis of a range of international studies also found women victims to be almost six times more likely than non-abused women to misuse alcohol (Golding 1999, p.120).

Yet, it has been suggested that alcohol has become the 'elephant in the room' for the domestic violence sector as most non-feminist research focuses on associations between perpetrator drinking and violence and therefore risks minimising issues of power and control (Braaf 2012). Some have suggested that feminists resist such work as it perpetuates an acceptance of the popular idea that alcohol alone may cause domestic abuse and therefore risks absolving the perpetrator of responsibility (Room et al. 2010; Laslett et al. 2015). These points are explored further in the chapters that follow. However, this study challenged these accusations and aimed to address the gap by studying the intersection of alcohol and domestic abuse from a feminist perspective, both theoretically and methodologically. Firstly, by the use of contemporary feminist theoretical frameworks of domestic abuse in this study, that recognise the importance of power and control, and so shifted the focus away from physical violence. Secondly, a feminist participative methodology and method were deployed to open up the space to allow women's voices to be heard on the subject of the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol. Thirdly, and crucially, this study adopted a gendered analysis; one that views violence against women as a manifestation of male power, and applied this to the intersecting experiences of alcohol use and domestic abuse.

Feminist researcher Ettorre (1992) argues that women and alcohol research has also focused too much on statistics, excluding human feeling and the space for compassion, thus showing a lack of sympathetic consciousness of others' suffering or a desire to reduce it. In turn, she advocates the value of a women-sensitive approach that aids an understanding of how women may not only be hurt by alcohol use itself, but furthermore by a lack of understanding of the issues relating to their drinking. This study addressed this by its use of a qualitative design employing a feminist standpoint that does not add women to the picture but begins from their perspective (Letherby 2003). There is also a need for research to link women's use of alcohol to their experience of themselves as women in society and reveal the links between their consumption practices and broad social issues such as the power

experienced in gender relations (Etorre 1992). Examination of the gendered construction of alcohol consumption, and how women link their narratives to this, was also key to this research.

Women who use alcohol do not do so in a vacuum; they do so in a society that has specific attitudes to women and alcohol which often generates negative feelings in women who drink in a way that is not deemed socially acceptable. It is argued that the shame and stigma arising from women's use of alcohol in general can be traced to a historical moral discourse on women's drinking in relation to perceptions of acceptable and appropriate behaviour that persist today (Plant 1997). Powerful discourses that perpetuate negative versions of women, viewing drinking as problematic or even pathological, continue to be reinforced in contemporary media (Day et al. 2004). Women need to resist and negotiate these stigmatised subject positions to protect their moral status as good women and to justify their choices in alcohol consumption (Rolfe et al. 2009). It can therefore be argued that all women who drink do so against this 'wallpaper': a background that judges women who use alcohol, differently from men. It further raises the question as to how women in the subjugated position of domestic abuse experience these gendered cultural norms. This was a key feature of this research. This study also recognised the complexities of the social world and the importance of the intersectional impact of other cultural, structural and economic influences, including class, ethnicity and race, which were at play in women's lives, and took this into consideration.

This study was distinctive in multiple ways. Privileging women's voices and experiences as a source of knowledge, through a visual participatory method, and combining this with contemporary feminist understandings of domestic abuse, produced a small, rich and unique body of knowledge on the subject of domestic abuse and alcohol. Specifically, bringing together Michael Johnson's (2008) typology of domestic violence with Evan Stark's (2007) framework of coercive control, created a lens through which a nuanced understanding of the complexity of domestic abuse could be revealed. In turn, this enabled new insights in relation to not only how women understood, managed and negotiated the use of alcohol within this intimate context, but how gendered societal discourses intersected with those experiences. Telling a different story of domestic abuse and alcohol, one that moves away from

purely looking at the physical violence and men's drinking, has the potential to reveal to survivors, professionals and the general public, a new perspective. A perspective that uncovers the complex and often contradictory, gendered discourses which women must negotiate in their roles as women, partners and mothers in the context of domestic abuse. These discourses were found to contribute to women's entrapment, owing to their invisibility and general acceptance as the 'wallpaper' that constitutes the backdrop to women's lives.

Thesis structure

Proceeding from this introduction, Chapters Two (A & B) explore both the theoretical and empirical literature in the fields of domestic abuse and alcohol use. I explore the importance of contemporary and historical debates, stressing the salience of gender to this study. Contemporary feminist theoretical frameworks of domestic abuse that underpin this study are highlighted. I then examine empirical work on both the duality of alcohol and domestic abuse and women's alcohol use in society, emphasising the problematic way women's drinking has been perceived.

In Chapter Three, outlining the research design, I further develop the feminist perspective of this study, providing the rationale for a feminist participatory approach. Advantages and disadvantages of visual methods, in particular, the justification for the visual method of Photovoice are examined. I then introduce my collaborative partners and the women participants. The nature of this study invited a close examination of the ethical considerations for the study which is reported before I outline how thematic analysis was used to produce multiple levels of themes from the data.

Prior to progressing to the findings chapters, I pause to reflect upon the experience of undertaking feminist participatory action research and the Photovoice process, in particular considering the multiple roles of the researcher. I also reflect upon the participant experience in order to assess the value of this approach.

Based upon three overarching themes produced by the data analysis Chapters Four, Five and Six present the findings in a progressive way. Each of these chapters incorporates photographs taken by the women participants, and I weave the photo-narratives in through the sociological interpretation. Firstly, Chapter Four develops

the overarching theme of 'managing', and its related themes, to paint a picture of the lived experience of domestic abuse, exposing the importance of power and control. This sets the context for Chapter Five where I examine women's space for autonomy in relation to their drinking, through a second overarching theme of 'dilemmas'. Chapter Six then highlights women's concerns through the final theme of 'being judged'.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the key findings from the previous chapters in relation to the theoretical and empirical literature. I explore how these coalesce to address the research questions, with regard to how women negotiated alcohol use in a domestic abuse setting, and the narratives they generated. I complete this chapter with a conclusion on the findings, their potential impact and suggestions for further research.

Concluding the thesis in Chapter Eight, I revisit the key themes and findings to highlight the contribution of this study to the fields of both domestic abuse and alcohol research. I also identify its potential contribution to policy and practice as well as making recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two (A)

Domestic abuse - contemporary frameworks and debates

Introduction

The following two chapters explore the relevant literature, both theoretical and empirical, across the fields of domestic abuse and alcohol use, including where they intersect.

This first of these chapters is designed to introduce a critical and reflexive view of the current and historical debates, concepts and theories on domestic abuse that have informed the aim, focus and design of this research. Current debates and controversies are used to highlight recent history before moving on to explore the value of contemporary approaches to domestic abuse. It is structured to include theoretical literature that underpins the framework for the study.

Domestic abuse: contemporary understandings and controversies

Understanding of domestic abuse has been conceptualised in numerous ways over recent decades (Donovan and Hester 2014). This has been influenced by the interests of different groups and government policy. As this knowledge has developed so has the language used to describe it. Terms and definitions are often the starting point for the recognition of a problem and can provide parameters in discourses that highlight what may or may not be foregrounded (Hearn and McKie 2010). A broad range of terms and definitions are adopted across the academic and activist literature and across different countries: domestic violence, wife battering, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence and abuse (DVA). Examination of this is important, as it is more than an issue of words, as naming can be a political act (Stark 2007). Definitions can also be understood as a reflection of shifts in both public perception and in legislation. The term wife battering, commonly used in the USA, has generally been rejected in the UK because of its direct association with physical violence (Lombard and McMillan 2013), and because it fails to reflect a recognition that heterosexual women in dating or co-habiting circumstances, as well as those in same-sex relationships, can experience abuse within an intimate relationship (Donovan and Hester 2014).

Even the term 'domestic' has been criticised because of its association with the home and the private domain, as not all violence occurs within the home. In addition, it has been argued that the terms domestic and interpersonal violence (IPV), favoured by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2014), fail to recognise the gendered nature of the abuse (Hearn and McKie 2010).

The salience of gender

Yet, shifts in terminology also reflect progress in the theoretical field, strongly influenced by feminist research and activism. Understanding of the phenomenon has progressed from being viewed as an individual and rare psychopathology to one driven by structural factors in society, underpinned by and perpetuating inequality (Lombard and McMillan 2013). Such progress is reflected in the development of policy within the UK. The UK government, after pressure from support agencies, extended their definition of 'domestic violence' from March 2013 to de-emphasise physical violence and recognise a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour, renaming it "domestic violence and abuse (DVA)" (Home Office 2013). It is important to note that UK policy applies to England and Wales. In contrast, the Scottish Government operates from a gender based definition that recognises coercive control, adopts the term "domestic abuse" and has adopted a gendered analysis towards all forms of violence against women that includes domestic abuse:

Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as 'gender based' this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girls' subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence. (Scottish Government 2009b, p.7)

However, this approach does not go uncontested, with critics arguing that this heterocentric strategy, by focusing on women, denies or ignores experiences of abuse in same-sex relationships (Dempsey 2011). Rhodes (2011) counters that a gender based analysis is not just about who does what to whom, but seeks to understand the context, meaning and impact of abuse. Recent work by Donovan and Hester (2014), in a comparison of experiences across heterosexual and same-sex relationships, concluded that gender, as well as sexuality, are central to those experiences. Two key points arise from this debate that are crucial to this study and to this field of research. Firstly, the important shift away from focusing on physical acts of violence that have distracted attention from the wide repertoire of abusive practices deployed by abusive men (Stark 2007; Lombard and McMillan 2013). Secondly, the importance of placing gender at the heart of any definition and analysis of violence against women.

Gender

Throughout this thesis I will be emphasising the salience of gender to the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use. That gender is constituted in and by society and culture, rather than nature and biology, is a basic tenet of feminism and the women's movement. In its most common form, the term 'gender' means the cultural difference between men and women, based upon the biological division between them. However, differing theoretical perspectives have been developed within sociology that demonstrate a picture more complex than a simplistic theory of difference (Connell 2009). Individualist approaches to gender treat gender as an identity, characteristic, or trait of individual persons (Risman 2004). From this perspective, masculinity and femininity are traits that are internalised by men and women so individual people are gendered or have gender; gender resides in individual minds and/or bodies (Anderson 2007). In contrast, structuralist models of gender conceptualise gender as an overarching framework that organises social institutions and social relationships. Within this model gender is a system of stratification that places women and men into unequal categories, roles, and occupations (Lorber 1994; Risman 2004; Anderson 2007). However Connell (2012) has argued that categorical thinking about gender underplays diversity, and cannot capture

differences within the gender categories: such as between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities. She therefore advocates a relational view of gender that understands it as multidimensional and gives a central place to the relations between, and among, men and women. For example, doing gender as a female is not only related to ideas of femininity, but also to masculinity and vice versa. Such a view is supported by Stevi Jackson (2001) who stresses how gender operates on multiple levels: the levels of social structure, of meaning and of lived experiences, all of which interrelate. This integrated viewpoint is appropriate for this contemporary analysis of domestic abuse and alcohol use.

It is important to note that contemporary poststructuralist and cultural feminists also challenge a binary view of gender as fixed and rigid, seeing sex and gender as shifting, fluid categories (Butler, 1990, cited in Lorber 1994 p.4). Equally feminists writing from a racial ethnic perspective critique theory built on this binary opposition of men and women as failing to recognise the importance of intersections of race and social class with gender in the formation of systems of inequality and oppression (Lorber 1994).

Having considered these differing perspectives I find gender theorist Raewyn Connell's (2009) focus on the relational aspect of gender, using her concept of the gender order of a society, a particularly compatible framework for this study. In this framework the gender order of society incorporates gender regimes of institutions, each defined by sets of gender arrangements. Being a man or woman in society is not a state predetermined by biology, it is a becoming, a condition actively under construction. Yet we cannot think of womanhood or manhood as fixed by nature, nor can it be seen as imposed entirely from outside forces. Individuals construct themselves as masculine or feminine and in doing so they claim a place in the gender order of society, or respond to the place they have been given (Connell 2009). Yet, we are not free to make our own gender however we like, our gender practice, or how we 'do gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987) is heavily influenced by the gender order in which we find ourselves. In this way gender arrangements can be considered a social structure. Connell (2009) stresses how such a structure of relations does not definitively decide how we act; such an idea of social

determinism is argued as being as flawed as that of biological determinism, but it does define possibilities and consequences for action.

Of general importance and in direct relation to this study, gender in a strong patriarchal structure; a society consisting of a male dominated power structure across institutions and social privilege can be seen as a harmful to women:

The harm of gender is first and foremost in the system of inequality in which women and girls are exploited, discredited and made vulnerable to abuse and attack. The still massive incidence of domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse (mainly, though not exclusively, of girl children) is an easily recognisable marker of power and vulnerability. (Connell 2009, p.143)

Connell (2009) further points out that in official discourse such problems are framed as a minority of men out of control, but the scale of the problem would not exist if violence and abuse were not sustained by other mechanisms within the social order.

Gender is often misunderstood or dismissed as a woman's issue. One reason proposed is that men tend not to think of themselves as 'gendered' beings; not having to think about gender is part of the patriarchal dividend men gain from their position in the gender order (Greig, Kimmel and Lang 2000). The broader patriarchal dividend is argued by Connell (2009) as the surplus of resources in terms of power, authority, economical and cultural advantage, available to men as a group, as a result of gender inequality. Although men in general benefit from the inequalities of this gender order dividend, they do not benefit equally and not all men have power. Gendered power relations exist among men and have been highlighted in sociological work on multiple forms of masculinity; hegemonic and subordinated masculinities, identified as part of a hierarchy of masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Where men fail to conform to the dominant, hegemonic definitions of masculinities, such as being gay, showing emotions or not drinking excessively, they may suffer abuse or discrimination. Men in society who do conform may also pay a price, a higher rate of death from violence or a lower life expectancy. They may be inclined towards risk-taking behaviour to prove their masculinity in ways that can be damaging to health (Doyal 2003; Connell 2009).

A gendered analysis of men's violence against women views it as a manifestation of male power (Dobash and Dobash 1992). It also offers a valuable conceptual tool that allows us to fully understand the phenomenon. A gendered analysis argues that domestic abuse can "only properly be understood by considering its history, context, meanings, impact and consequences through the lens of gender" (Orr 2007, p. 2). The risks inherent in failing to apply a gendered analysis are outlined by a number of commentators. Hearn and McKie (2013, p.13) argue that policies that ignore gender may focus on women as service users but they are accompanied by ungendered discourses that ignore that most abusers are men, therefore enabling an "averted gaze to the gendered nature of violence". This in turn allows us to avoid critique of the role of patriarchy and men's practices. Stanko (2006) adds that to ignore gender in relation to violence is effectively hiding its impact, on the basis that gender is core to how all men and women talk about, understand and negotiate violence and their safety. Examples of degendering of the problem in the media, by reframing it as human violence, have been highlighted by Berns' (2001) study of the representation of the issue in political and men's magazines. This discursive strategy of patriarchal resistance minimises the role of gender and power in abusive relationships with the potential to impact public opinion and understanding of the issue. Therefore, taking a gendered analysis to this research is crucial as not to do so would impoverish the analysis and reinforce the power of this averted gaze.

Gender Symmetry debate

While feminist theory, that puts gender inequality at the core of understanding domestic abuse, has continued to dominate research in this field, it has been challenged by family conflict theorists who argue that conflict is a normal part of relationships and family life. They also propose that women are as violent as men and therefore gender is irrelevant (Straus and Gelles 1990; Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2010; Dutton 2012). This long running gender symmetry debate continues across academic and media dialogue (Kimmel 2002; Johnson 2008). While feminist sociological researchers take up the asymmetry position, with women predominantly the victims of male violence (Dobash and Dobash 2004; Stark 2007; Johnson 2008) they are challenged by statistical claims that women are as violent as men (Straus

and Gelles 1990; Dutton 2012), this alternative position being considered a backlash against feminism (Stanko 2006).

In turn, feminist critiques of the family violence position are framed around two key areas: sampling bias in the data sources and methodology. Family conflict theorists (Straus and Gelles 1990; Dutton 2012) predominantly cite findings from large-scale population survey research in the UK and USA that show rough gender symmetry in the perpetration of intimate partner violence. Contrastingly, feminist researchers cite evidence from studies which engaged agencies, police, women's shelters and hospital emergency rooms (Berns 2001; Johnson 2007). Kimmel (2002) points out that not only are the data sources different, they are measuring two different things. Large scale crime victimisation surveys, due to the nature of their questions asking about assaults considered a crime, tend to find that domestic violence is rare, escalates over time and is mainly perpetrated by men. Contrastingly, family conflict studies drawing upon household surveys, asking different questions relating to experiences of expressing conflict within the family, including those considered non-serious, tend to find high rates of domestic violence incidents that are stable in severity with low injury rates (Kimmel 2002; Johnson 2008). Additionally, the counting of victim and perpetrators purely by sex fails to consider how gender identities and ideologies are performed by both men and women (Kimmel 2002). Secondly, gender symmetry claims are further critiqued on the specifics of the survey measures, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) and the updated CTS2 (Straus et al. 1996), developed and used by Murray Straus and colleagues to measure intra-family conflict and violence. A failure to capture context, simply counting the acts of violence, with no consideration of the specific circumstances, is seen as a weakness that distorts the findings. Straus (2007) has defended this by arguing that context should be explored separately. A further suggested weakness of the CTS is a failure to capture motivation, such as retaliation, and the focus on violence used expressively rather than instrumentally e.g. to gain control (Kimmel 2002). In addition, it is argued that many of the items fail to correspond with the type of assault actually reported by abused women (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2010).

Critique of the feminist research position tends to be centred on its refusal to accept that women are violent (Dutton 2012), although Johnson has pointed out that there is

no single feminist position and his work is firmly based on sociological theory (Johnson 2011). To take this position is not to deny that women's abuse of men does occur. Feminist researchers have found that it is less frequent, takes different forms, and men do not experience the same type of fear (Dobash and Dobash 2004; Johnson 2011). What is of further importance here is the way men and women interpret and report their own experiences of perpetration and victimisation differently. Research by Dobash and Dobash (2004) indicates that while men underestimate their own violence, women tend to overestimate their violence and the consequences. Because of this, any understanding of these experiences needs to be located in a broader gendered context that also recognises the existence of power and control.

Reframing the problem - theoretical frameworks

Typology

How we view domestic violence is at the root of the problem here. Johnson (2011) argues that we need to cease viewing the nature of domestic violence as if it is a single phenomenon to allow us to see its gendered nature. He provides some useful mediation between these opposing positions through his typology work that informs contemporary feminist analyses. His qualitative distinction between types of violence has been an influential explanation for the disparate findings in the gender symmetry debate (Anderson 2008) and is considered one of the most important and the most useful classification schemes (Day and Bowen 2015). Alternative typology work exists within the disciplines of psychology (Gondolf 1999; Tweed and Dutton 1998) and criminology (Gilchrist et al. 2003), focusing on categorising psychological characteristics of perpetrators with a view to understanding appropriate interventions but does not examine the nature of the violence itself.

Johnson's typology framework makes the distinction between four main types of violence:

1. **Situational couple violence:** the most common type of physical aggression in couple situations, which is often mutual and not part of a general pattern of control.

2. **Coercive controlling violence: intimate terrorism** embedded in a pattern of power and control that includes intimidation, isolation, coercion and threats. Control tactics can be effective without high levels of actual violence. The type of violence most frequently encountered in agency settings.
3. **Violent resistance:** most commonly referred to as self-defence, experienced as an immediate reaction to an assault.
4. **Mutual violent resistance:** both parties are violent and controlling.

(Johnson 2008)

Johnson (2008) theorises that each side of the debate, by examining different populations, due to different methods, were inadvertently studying different kinds of partner violence. He argues that there are two qualitatively different forms, or patterns of violence. One, part of a general pattern of power and control (intimate terrorism) and the other motivated not by control but by escalating conflict (situational couple violence). He argues that couples involved in situational couple violence are unlikely to become agency clients as such abuse is less likely to require police intervention, hospital admission or escape to a shelter, therefore is less likely to be captured in research data on agency populations. Equally individuals involved in intimate terrorism are less likely to participate in general surveys for fear of exposure. Johnson (2008) was able to validate his typology based on a reassessment of data captured by Irene Frieze in the 1970's in Pittsburgh, USA, which incorporated interviews with women from a range of sources including both agency and a general sample. As a result he proposes that intimate terrorism, involving coercive controlling violence, is the main type of abuse experienced by women, but not necessarily involving the most physical violence. Johnson (2008) points out that once violence is experienced in an intimate relationship we need to know if it was enacted in a general context of power and control. It is therefore the responsibility of researchers to ask the questions that allow participants to explore this perspective.

Framework of Coercive Control

While typology models have progressed our understanding, a continued focus on physical violence has led research and theory to stall in the domestic violence movement, perpetuating the myth that domestic abuse is all about the violence. In making this claim, Stark (2007) argues that we are tackling the wrong problem, and by only looking at the physical we are failing to see a constellation of events. The embedding of the violence model in law and policy has led to an incident based, or episodic view of the phenomenon, where each report is viewed as a discrete occurrence, therefore failing to reveal the ongoing and multi-faceted nature of abuse (Stark 2013). For example, women have consistently talked to support agencies about the hidden abuses that are often harder to deal with than the more visible violence. Abuse that erodes a woman's self esteem and devalues her as a human being fails to be captured and represented in the medical or criminal models that have dominated (Williamson 2010). Forensic social worker Evan Stark's (2007) theoretical framework of coercive control, drawing upon both the typology work of Johnson (2008), and years of women's testimonies, is hailed as a paradigm shift as it highlights the key dynamic of abuse as being coercive control and not the physical violence (Arnold 2009). Stark has been involved in the domestic violence field since the 1970s across a range of areas: health research, social work, shelter provision and the delivery of expert court testimony for abused women who have killed their partners (Stark 2013). He has used this depth of experience to develop his theoretical framework and its impact is seen in how it currently informs both work in the women's shelter movement and government policy in Scotland (Scottish Government 2009b) and internationally. In this model the violence is enacted strategically and purposefully as part of a range of tactics to entrap women in personal life. The physical abuse may still exist but is interwoven with three equally key tactics of intimidation, isolation and control that may incorporate a range of psychological, emotional or sexual abuses (Stark 2007).

In order to understand the technology of coercive control it is necessary to understand the importance of gender structures and practices. Structural feminist theory argues that gendered differences reflect the gender order of patriarchal societies where men have historically held power positions leading to a sense of

ownership and entitlement to male privilege and control over women's lives (Dobash and Dobash 1998). It is argued that such expectations and power inequality are the preconditions for the use of violence by men in intimate relationships when their needs, stated or unstated, are not being met (Anderson and Umberson 2001). Gender theorist Connell (2009) argues that within this gender order exist local gender regimes; patterns of gender arrangements that include the domestic unit which is argued as a site of power for men. These regimes assume default roles that favour hegemonic masculinity; a culturally specific ideal masculinity, one of multiple available masculinities, but the dominant form defined in terms of a patriarchal system (Connell and Messerschmitt 2005). Although some accept an official discourse that presents a minority of men out of control, the scale of abuse perpetrated would not occur unless it was "sustained by the interplay of other mechanisms of the social order which operate in the economic, cultural and social dimensions" (Connell 2009, p. 143). She therefore argues that contemporary hegemonic masculinity is dangerous because it provides a cultural rationale for what she names inter-personal violence (IPV).

A key component to this strategy is the micro-regulation of minute aspects of the woman's life, focusing especially on the roles associated with a woman's subordinate domestic and sexual status, such as childcare, housework, appearance and cooking (Stark 2007). Williamson (2010) highlights how it is this everyday control and its hidden nature that makes a compliant victim, or as Stark (2007) emphasises, such abuse is hidden in plain sight by the acceptance of women's lack of entitlement to full autonomy. In turn this relates to Connell's (2009) concept of emphasised femininity: a femininity oriented towards accommodating the interests of men through compliance which is favoured in the gender regime of the household (Connell 2009). Coercive control can be seen as a strategic form of behaviour attempting to reinforce and expand the wider gender-based privilege into a regime of domination in personal relationships (Stark 2013), a recreation of patriarchy in the home. Arnold (2009) suggests that women are made particularly vulnerable to coercive control in private because of their subordinate position in society.

While Stark (2007) uses a cage analogy to describe the entrapment of women as a useful theoretical tool, he suggests that taking it too literally fails to recognise the

ways that abused women manage a complex interplay of their abuser's control and their own resistance. Women are not passive victims; they find ways to exercise agency within an abusive situation. By taking the current victimisation narrative and reframing women as legitimately challenging men's attempts to attack and deconstruct their personhood, women can be viewed as living consciously in relation to domination. Although severely limited in their choice of actions that may be seen as resistance, they can be "...seen as exercising control in the context of no control" (Stark 2007, p. 216).

Feminist work has theorised the concept of resistance in response to domestic abuse in varied but interconnected ways. Liz Kelly (1988) stresses that acts of resistance aim to challenge men's attempts to control while minimising risk of further injury; in this way she categorises responses as either resistance or avoidance, with most women using a combination of both. Here, resistance is also seen as a coping strategy, where coping is any act taken to avoid or control distress. The idea of resistance has been closely allied to the development of the term survivor in preference to the term victim. Kelly (1988) argues that the use of the term victim renders invisible the active multitude of ways that women find to resist, cope and survive. In the development of an index of women's strategies of resistance in intimate partner violence, Goodman et al. (2003) highlighted a distinction between private strategies: those carried out in isolation, informal network strategies: involving family and friends and public strategies: engaging public agencies. Within the category of private strategies they usefully distinguished between placating; acts attempting to change the man's behaviour without challenging his sense of control, and acts of resistance; intending to change behaviour and shift the balance of power by challenging his sense of control. Furthermore, Lempert (1996) highlighted how women revealed self-preservation strategies such as fantasies and fictionalised plans of murder or suicide. These were theorised to be seductively powerful because they created a sense of autonomy in the women, devising a vision of a way out, an imagining of instant relief, but it was noted that while contemplating such extreme acts they continued to rely upon other strategies. Resistance may also take subtle forms of sabotage masked by seeming compliance to the rules of the perpetrator (Scott 1985, Stark 2007). It is this subtle mix of outward compliance and tentative resistance that Scott (1985) highlights, in all power situations, makes it difficult to

determine where one ends and the other begins. The different ways that resistance is theorised is further complicated by the use of the concept of resilience which tends to be used with respect to women's ability to survive abuse without challenging the conditions of power. Other authors have suggested that a woman changing her own behaviour in line with the abuser's demands, to make the relationship safer for her and her children, may be considered 'doing gender', while anything that challenges the violence and power involves 'not doing gender' (Cavanagh 2003, Pain 2014).

Summary

This chapter has highlighted the importance of language and terminology in reflecting the historical development of theory and practice in the field of domestic abuse and how this currently influences divergent policy within the UK setting. In particular, the importance of a gendered analysis in feminist work on domestic abuse has been stressed, as feminist research places gender inequality at the heart of any understanding of violence against women.

It is clear that the domestic abuse field continues to be caught up in controversy and debate as to whether women are as violent as men, with ongoing disputes between feminist and family violence theorists over data sources and methodology. However, the development of feminist theoretical frameworks has provided useful mediation. Johnson's (2008) typology work, viewing domestic abuse as more than a single phenomenon, has highlighted an important distinction where violence may be strategic and purposeful with control over the woman being the ultimate goal. Combining Johnson's typology work with Stark's (2007) framework of coercive control provides a compelling theoretical basis for this study. Understanding the technology of coercive control also shifts the emphasis away from purely physical violence and in doing so allows identification of multiple ways that women may be damaged and entrapped in personal life by domestic abuse. Furthermore, connecting these frameworks to gender structures and practices in society reinforces a need for a gendered analysis in domestic abuse research as that taken in the current study.

Chapter Two (B)

Women, alcohol and domestic abuse

Introduction

Having primarily explored the theoretical literature and current debates on domestic abuse in the previous chapter, this chapter will expand the critical reflection to include an exploration of key empirical work in both fields that emphasises where these issues intersect. It will also broaden out the review to explore theoretical and empirical work on women and alcohol in general, to set the wider context for the study. In doing so, the chapter will debate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and identify relevant gaps that informed the basis of this study.

Alcohol in this context

The role of alcohol is considered an important resource which both men and women use to construct a variety of gendered identities (Lyons and Willott 2008) and ways of doing or undoing gender (West and Zimmerman 1987, Deutsch 2007). Hey (1986, p.49) suggests that “the way we live our femininity is intimately connected to how men live their masculinity in a misogynistic culture” and is particularly relevant to the use of alcohol. Hegemonic masculinity has been firmly aligned with acts of buying and drinking pints together in the pub, as is the ideal of drinking ‘like a man’ and the ability to ‘hold’ one’s drink ; the ability to drink excessively yet still appear to be in control (Lyons et al. 2006; Emslie et al. 2012; Emslie et al. 2013). It has equally been associated with toxic practices of risky drinking and violence to reinforce gender dominance (Peralta et al. 2010). Yet women who drink have been historically associated with a moral discourse connected to sexual abandonment, unacceptable loss of control, loss of reputation, adulterous wives and bad mothers (Plant 1997; Waterson 2000). This is generally framed around gendered ideas of femininity, masculinity, respectability and appropriate behaviour (Ettorre 1992; Plant 1997; Waterson 2000; Kehoe 2013; Orr 2013). Such discourses in society around alcohol, intoxication and ideals of masculinity and femininity influence attitudes and beliefs. In a domestic abuse setting perpetrators deploy cultural discourses in a way that benefit their own purpose (Morris 2009).

As discussed earlier, Johnson (2008) argues that situational couple violence is probably the most common type of physical aggression in couple conflict. It is provoked by a particular encounter leading either partner to react with violence. During such episodes either partner's drinking may be seen to be the source of the conflict (Johnson 2008). Alternatively, intimate terrorism is distinguished by a range of control tactics that one person is exercising over the other, leading to parallels being drawn in the literature with other forms of constraints such as prisoners of war and hostage taking (Herman 1992; Stark 2007; Johnson 2008; Pain 2012). Stark (2007) in his theoretical framework of coercive control, argues that in the context of an abusive situation, victims may be left feeling they have lost their voice both literally and metaphorically, effectively losing any control. Such a state of chronic risk may lead them to seek alternative ways to feel in control such as self medicating with drugs or alcohol, self harm or suicide. These, Stark (2007, p.245) argues, are examples of "...exercising control in the context of no control" in such a restricted space for action. He stresses that women are not passive victims; they find ways to exercise agency within an abusive situation. By drawing upon these current theories of domestic abuse, this study intends to bring a contemporary understanding of women's experiences in this context, in particular in relation to alcohol use and gendered power structures, a perspective that is missing from the existing body of research.

Domestic abuse and alcohol – Existing research

There is acknowledgement of an intersection between alcohol and domestic abuse that recognises a complex relationship (McMurrin and Gilchrist 2008; Galvani 2010b; Peralta et al. 2010) with the exact role of alcohol being contested (Leonard 2005). Research to date in this area can be classified into theories of a relationship between alcohol consumption and the perpetration of physical violence, and alcohol consumption and experiencing domestic abuse (Galvani and Toft 2015). A competing body of psychological research has suggested a number of models in the pursuit of direct causal explanations. The proximal effects model suggests a link via the pharmacological effects of alcohol (Leonard and Quigley 1999). Alternatively alcohol has also been considered as a variable in IPV alongside aggression and other factors such as age: the spurious effects model. Additionally, an indirect effects model has been explored suggesting that alcohol and aggression are causally linked

and mediated by other factors such as marital conflict over drinking behaviour or expenditure (Klostermann and Fals-Stewart 2006; Foran and O'Leary 2008). Further psychological research has explored the link through a classification of perpetrator characteristics, aimed at reducing domestic violence through alcohol interventions (Gilchrist et al. 2003). Meanwhile, others argue for a theory of co-occurrence rather than causality based on alcohol being only one of many influencing factors (Braaf 2012). However, on the basis of a lack of any design that will definitively demonstrate causality, Leonard (2005, p.423) has argued for a status in the field where "we should conclude that heavy drinking is a contributing cause of violence", but it can be argued that there is insufficient evidence that alcohol alone causes domestic violence. An alternative insight is provided by the perspective offered by Hutchison (1999) who found that the unpredictability associated with drunkenness, rather than drinking itself, is what escalated levels of fear in abused women and could be considered a powerful weapon for men seeking to dominate their partners.

While causal explanations have some appeal, they are argued as being overly simplistic and individualistic (Galvani and Toft 2015). They ignore the heterogeneity of domestic abuse identified in contemporary typology work (Gilchrist et al. 2014), and are further contested by evidence that not all drinkers become violent towards intimate partners (Leonard and Quigley 1999), and men who are violent when drinking are also violent when sober (Leonard and Quigley 1999; Galvani 2010b). What is clear is that this has become a highly contested and controversial research area. Gordon (1988) highlights how associating domestic violence with drinking situates it in a male culture of recreation, trivialising it and allowing it to be viewed as a male quirk rather than a crime against women. More crucially, this focus neglects the potential influence of cultural factors, including gender and issues of power and control. Yet, these sit at the core of contemporary theories of domestic abuse that understand violence as a deliberate choice and not a matter of men being out of control (Pence and Paymar 1993; Dobash and Dobash 2004; Stark 2007; Johnson 2008). This study aimed to fill this gap by drawing upon these contemporary understandings and frameworks.

Cultural beliefs

Cultural beliefs about the disinhibiting effect of alcohol are important at both a societal (macro) and individual (micro) level. Gelles and Cavanaugh (2005) argue that association does not equate to causation, and such an argument depends significantly on beliefs in the direct disinhibiting effects of alcohol as a causal agent with direct links to the human brain, causing the release of violent tendencies. This belief has had a powerful influence in Western cultures (Room 1980), despite MacAndrew and Edgerton's (1969) classic anthropological study which examined cross-cultural evidence on how people react to drinking. Their findings challenge the premise that if alcohol has a direct chemical effect on the brain then there should be little difference in behavioural consequences. However, they found significant cross-cultural variation in behaviour, with some cultures experiencing generally passive outcomes and some aggressive, that appeared to relate to cultural beliefs. The classic idea of disinhibition, where blame is attributed to the substance and not the person, is challenged by alternative theories of deviancy disavowal; alcohol creates a time-out for deviant behaviour, and learned disinhibition; drunken behaviour is learned through observation of others, for example in peer groups with particular drinks being cited as being more aggression inducing than others (Bennett and Williams 2003).

There is, however, evidence of a growing awareness of the importance of exploring cultural beliefs to the extent that they are currently recognised as relevant factors in international public health policy addressing alcohol related IPV (WHO 2014; Wilsnack 2012). Johnson's (2001) quantitative study using a subset of data from a violence against women survey in Canada (1992) found that male attitudes and beliefs regarding the right to control female partners was a significantly stronger predictor of domestic violence than alcohol, age or class variables. Furthermore, the enactment of negative attitudes, particularly degrading and devaluing their partners, reduced the significance of alcohol to a minimum. These findings supported those of Kantor and Straus (1987) who previously reported significance in the acceptance of wife-beating.

More recently, Gilchrist et al. (2014), in a mixed methods study examined the potential relationships between what they termed IPV and alcohol through three

population groups in the west of Scotland who had experienced differing levels of relationship conflict; convicted male perpetrators, female domestic abuse survivors and a sample of the general male population in non abusive relationships. In their examination of the roles of alcohol expectancies and the social context of domestic abuse, they found that the perpetrators were keen to present their violence as drunken mistakes in a context of being out of control and at the mercy of external factors. However, their narratives also reflected clear indications of entitlement, desire for control over their partner, manipulation and gendered beliefs, as found in previous domestic abuse research (Pence and Paymar 1993; Stark 2007). The researchers highlighted the significance of a male entitlement to drink, alongside gendered beliefs that women were expected to drink differently in society, and that their drinking led them to be blamed for violence against them while men were to be excused. Additionally they reported evidence of tactics of denial, minimising and blaming, others or alcohol, for the abuse. This blame paradigm is one that is well recognised within the field of domestic abuse, even when alcohol is not a factor (Berns 2001), with the perpetrator's version of reality being a core tool of domination within the experience of coercive control (Stark 2007). While Gilchrist and colleagues (2014) provided some valuable insights from the voices of male perpetrators, they acknowledged a limitation in that none of the women survivors who participated in the survey component were willing to be interviewed, a problem they theorised as a reluctance to engage with a process that may have appeared as victim blaming (Gilchrist et al. 2014). The current study opens up the space for women's voices to be heard reflecting their own experiences.

Women who experience domestic abuse face challenges in making sense of what is happening to them, whether or not alcohol is involved. Discourses that are available at any moment in cultural life constrain the options open to women who need to make sense of threats and acts of violence and control (Lim et al. 2015). Berns' (2001) study of how the media de-gender the problem and gender the blame, highlights how political discourses shift the focus from abusers to victims. Such media representations influence the way that individuals, including survivors, construct their own ideas of what is normal and acceptable. Western culture offers what (Wood 2001, p.241) calls "vocabularies of understanding, motive and significance" to help people construct meanings attributable to their personal

experiences. Culturally acceptable narratives, within western cultures, such as blame the drink, enable women to reduce the dissonance between their hopes, for themselves and the relationship, and the reality of what they are experiencing.

However, other narratives, such as the public story of domestic abuse with its imagery of the stronger man physically abusing the weaker woman conflicts with experience of women facing an abusive partner who presents as in need of emotional care (Donovan and Hester 2014). Furthermore, Berns and Schweingruber (2007) have suggested that individuals experiencing a social problem such as domestic abuse are exposed to simplified narratives from the media that may conflict with the complexity of their own experiences, thus adding to the challenge of making sense of it. As a result women may need to continually reconstruct their identity through reconstructing the meaning they attach to the experience of abuse (Allen 2012). This reclaiming and reconstruction of themselves through giving their own meaning to their experiences is argued by Allen (2012) to be powerful and transformative, but this struggle for coherence can equally be exhausting and lead to self-loathing. Yet Gergen (1987, cited in Wood 2001, p.241) proposed that structure and coherence, or at least the illusion of it, may be found through the use of stories or narratives by placing ourselves in some narratives and not in others. Wood (2001) highlighted how, within western cultures, romance and gender narratives are interwoven, pervasive and bolstered through fairy tales and popular literature including film, television programs and magazines. Through these narratives women are taught to be accommodating to men's needs and pleasure; men are constructed as dominating, regarding women as inferior. In her study interviewing twenty women who had been in violent romantic relationships, Wood (2001) highlighted a reliance on such narratives, including both fairy tale and dark romance narratives, in making excuses for their partner's abuse and reflecting internalisation of expectations that they should nurture their abusive partners. Similarly, Towns and Adams (2000) demonstrated how constructions of romance and perfect love bound women to their partner despite the abuse. Boonzaier (2008) also reported how many abused women appropriated a femininity narrative of passivity with the narratives of their relationships interspersed with discourses of love and romance.

Feminist sociologist Stevi Jackson (1993) has highlighted the importance of discourses of love that are widely used to make sense of feelings and relationships in general. Equally she has warned that cultural depictions of love may bind us to the existing social order. More recently the concept of “practices of love” (Donovan and Hester 2014, p. 21) has been usefully explored to demonstrate how love is implicated in experiences of domestic abuse. Practices of love, identified as important to this work, are a subset of relationship practices, specifically: disclosing of intimacy, caring and emotion work and sexual behaviour, with dominant constructions of love argued as providing expectations of how adult intimate relationships should work. Gendered understandings of those practices are argued by Donovan and Hester (2014) as underpinning and reinforcing relationship rules in abusive relationships. In doing so they define the relationship as being predominantly for the abusive partner, who is positioned as the key decision maker with the woman defined as responsible for care of the partner and the relationship, as well as the household and children.

Other authors have highlighted how women are brought up to understand and enact a femininity that prioritises feelings, care work and emotion work (Hochschild 1983) and to prioritise the needs of others above their own (Duncombe and Marsden 1993). Unequal power relations can be hidden by the myth of gender equality (Lloyd and Emmerly 2000) and the beliefs around love can act to confuse survivors of abuse about how to make sense of, or even name, their experiences. Our western culture holds powerful messages about the transforming power of love, happy endings and women’s love and ability to change men (Wilcox 2006). The idea of ‘practices of love’ was unhooked from heterosexual gender norms by Donovan and Hester (2014) who found that they were in effect a part of the perpetrator’s toolkit of abusive practices, in both same sex and heterosexual relationships. A powerful example can be found in the paradox of perpetrators managing to elicit care and compassion, through declarations of love and promises to change despite a broad range of abusive behaviours. While practices of love were found to influence partners to stay longer than they might, beliefs in the power of love acted to confirm their decision to stay (Donovan and Hester 2014).

The question of how women respond to domestic abuse has been criticised for being over simplified and reductionist by framing the solution in terms of staying or leaving and as such neglects the complexity of their attempts to manage the safety of their relationships (Cavanagh 2003). The stay or leave dichotomy also fails to recognise the risks inherent in leaving. Women's responses have been found to be heavily influenced by the way their partners account for their abusive behaviour. Women must face countering not only men's behaviour but their constructions of meaning (Allen 2012). Work that has examined this has focused on responses to physical violence. Cavanagh et al. (2001) suggest that the process of meaning making is interactive but such negotiations between men and women can be a risky process for women, due to the power held by men to impose "definitional hegemony" (Lempert 1996, p.286). Using Irving Goffman's concept of remedial work (Goffman 1971, cited in Cavanagh et al. 2001, p.700), the authors found the use of three related devices: accounts, apologies and requests. Examples of accounts incorporated denial, not remembering, silence, blame, or reduced competence on the man's part, and requests involved blaming the woman who has not suitably responded to his demands. This study served to highlight the purpose behind men's responses, as exhibited through a range of discourses demonstrating how men seek to mitigate their own culpability while seeking absolution from the women for their abusive behavior that they have equally denied. Of key importance here is how men were attempting to not only reframe or erase women's experiences, but also to control how women might interpret and therefore respond to the situation.

Embedded in men's definitions is the use of language that introduces ambiguity that works to silence women's talk of their experiences. Ambiguity is achieved by exposing, through language, different possible interpretations of a situation from what would be considered commonsense. In this context of abuse, ambiguity casts the woman's interpretation into confusion and reframes the man's construction as commonsense (Towns and Adams 2015). The power held by the abuser makes his authoritative voice a compelling force as it regularly reintroduces fear and doubt leaving the woman in a state of doublethink: a conflicted state holding contradictory thoughts and beliefs in her head at one time (Herman 1992, Pain 2012). Although this state has been seen as a human survival strategy for difficult situations it is also linked to women feeling they are going crazy (Pain 2012).

An exploration of women's responses to abuse (Cavanagh 2003) found them to be dynamic and complex. Played out in relation to men's responses, women have to make decisions on what to do (cuddle him, fight back or call the police?) while continually assessing outcomes for themselves and their children. The aim to enforce definitional hegemony in relation to individual acts reflects the broader context of a tactic of coercive control, as the perpetrator aims to define his own version of reality that is ever changing and destabilising with him in control of the boundaries. Negotiating this unreality can be fear inducing while at the same time paralysing (Williamson 2010).

Feminist activists and researchers have been criticised internationally suggesting that alcohol has become the elephant in the room for the domestic violence sector because of this focus on causality in non-feminist work (Braaf 2012). Key researchers in the alcohol field have also suggested that feminists working in the domestic violence field resist such work on the basis of moral responsibility and the fear that seeing alcohol as causal absolves the perpetrator of responsibility (Room et al. 2010; Laslett et al. 2015). Yet, decades of feminist activism has challenged the societal acceptance of the blame paradigm. Campaigns emanating from the Zero Tolerance movement of the 1990's in Scotland were driven by related slogans: "drunk or sober – there is never an excuse" and "blame the woman, blame the drink, blame the weather" (Zero Tolerance 2010). Evidence based education provided by Scottish Women's Aid (2010) and literature from Alcohol Focus Scotland (Galvani 2010a) continue to challenge the pervasive belief in the disinhibiting power of alcohol combined with a culture of deviancy disavowal.

However, in research limited focus has been given to the topic and in particular to women's views and experiences of the use of alcohol in this specific context. The benefit of understanding alcohol use in context is not about offering causal explanations but is about foregrounding the diversity of meanings, significance and its interaction with other aspects of the lived experience (Barnes and Ward 2015). In a rare qualitative study in the UK on women's views of the role played by alcohol, specifically in relation the physical violence encountered in their abusive relationships, Galvani (2010b) suggests that the intimate nature of relationships can both serve to add and hide the complexities brought by alcohol, as either a

suggested facilitator of violence or as a coping mechanism. Through a range of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews of twenty women recruited through police services, the study aimed to examine anecdotal claims that women blame alcohol for their partner's violence. Having focused on male perpetrator's drinking and its relationship to their responsibility for the violence, Galvani concluded with a theory of responsible disinhibition; men's violence to women after drinking is theorised as a combination of pharmacological effects, contextual factors as well as personal choice (Galvani 2010b). Although the study also reported some evidence of women drinking to dampen emotional pain or fear or to boost their courage to respond, exploration of the women's own alcohol use was limited. This study fills this gap by offering an opportunity for a micro-exploration of women's experiences, using a method that allows women to not only explore their own experiences, but to share and make sense of them in a group setting (Wang and Burris 1999).

Women's drinking

A social problem?

Most of the previous work on women and alcohol has been problem oriented which Waterson (2000) claims to be part of the legacy of "mother's ruin"; associations with portrayals of gin drinking drunken mothers of the eighteenth century. Additionally it has been critiqued as focusing too much on statistics, excluding human feeling and the space for compassion: showing a lack of sympathetic consciousness of others' suffering or a desire to reduce it. It is further accused of lacking a gender sensitive perspective, despite the pervasiveness of gender dynamics in current drinking cultures, while focusing on clinical studies of problem drinkers rather than women's general experience (Ettorre 1992; Waterson 2000; Staddon 2015).

As a solution, Ettorre (1992) advocates the value of a women-sensitive approach that aids an understanding of how women may not only be hurt by alcohol use itself, but furthermore by a lack of understanding of the issues relating to their drinking. There is also a need for research to link women's use of alcohol to their experience of themselves as women in society and reveal the links between their consumption practices and broad social issues such as the power experienced in gender relations (Ettorre 1992). This would include studying women's alcohol use as a constructive

and autonomous response to their lives as they balance multiple risks against each other (Waterson 2000). Adopting such an approach is key to this research in relation to domestic abuse where autonomy may be severely compromised (Stark 2007). In keeping with the idea that thinking sociologically requires us to look critically at the connections between the personal and the social (Mills 1959), a social model of women's alcohol use and misuse, rather than a medical model, is required, as it links to the politics of inequality (Staddon 2015).

In a useful exception, examining women's everyday drinking, Waterston's (2000) qualitative study contrasting the lives of thirty professional with thirty non-professional women, all mothers, took up this challenge of a gender sensitive approach. Drawing upon Ettorre's (1997) distinction between positive and negative drinking, the study examined the pains and pleasures of drinking. This categorical distinction is useful as it does not propose any form of moral judgement, avoiding labelling the individuals as positive or negative drinkers but focuses on how alcohol is experienced either positively or negatively from their own perspective. The study affirmed how negative drinking leaves women feeling stigmatised and demoralised, with disapproval becoming the key issue, but that positive drinking is possible as a balance in our risk culture (Waterson 2000). Two inter-related key concerns are highlighted by this study. Firstly, by approaching the research as a re-examination of the historical concept of 'mother's ruin', it highlighted the way that women are targeted as mothers. Additionally, how women are constrained to conform to images of what it means to be acceptable women in society, but most fail to meet those ideals of femininity.

This highlights the reality that women who use alcohol do not do so in a vacuum, they do so in a society that has specific attitudes to women and alcohol. MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969, p.172) point out that "...people become living confirmations of their societies' teachings" and how these societal messages are individually interpreted. However, such messages are not gender neutral. Gomberg's (1988) research into alcoholic women's attitudes reported that they felt social attitudes to women's drinking were more negative towards female intoxication and problem drinking than they were towards male equivalents. Furthermore, they also showed that the women's own attitudes to women's intoxication as being more negative than

a comparable group of non-alcoholic women. It suggests that they reflect low opinions of themselves, their own shame and self abasement in relation to their alcoholism. Plant (1997) has argued that the shame and stigma arising from women's use of alcohol in general can be traced to a historical moral discourse on women's drinking in relation to what constitutes acceptable and appropriate behaviour that persists today. Parallels can be seen between the power of shame arising from societal attitudes to women and alcohol and the way in which shame can be both experienced and used as a controlling mechanism in domestic abuse (Stark 2007).

It is acknowledged that shame may be only one of a number of interconnected elements in the gendered construction of alcohol use. However, feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky (1991), in her examination of the phenomenon of shame, argues that women are more prone to shame. For Bartky, women's shame does not stand eventlike against a general background of non-shame, as it does for men. She argues that shame for women *is* the background against which other experiences stand. In this way shame for women is an attunement to the social environment. Therefore, in a patriarchal, sexist society shame can be considered a gendered emotion leading to conformity or subordination (Bartky 1991). In examining the way that women experiencing abuse labelled themselves stupid Enander (2010) applies this idea of gendered shame to this context. Mcerlain (2015) has also usefully explored Bartky's idea in relation to transgressive feminine practices to gendered drinking norms during periods in the nineteenth and twenty first centuries. She brought to attention how shame was used effectively in anti-drinking campaigns targeting women by use of images and messages representing sexual shaming; 'the other hangover'. These consisted of transgressive feminine poses such as a woman slumped on a toilet floor and representations of undesirable emotional behaviour, all connected to appearance and a need to be attractive and in control. The nineteenth century representations promoted abstinence as a required feminine practice at a time of prohibition and the study compared this to contemporary desirable constructions where moderation is required. However, both used the discursive constructions of ideal versus transgressive femininity as a form of moral regulation. The threat of the visibility of being drunk, of the recognition by others, is presented as shaming (Mcerlain 2015).

Powerful discourses that perpetuate negative versions of women, viewing drinking as problematic or even pathological, continue to be reinforced in contemporary media (Day et al. 2004). Women need to resist and negotiate these stigmatised subject positions to protect their moral status as good women and to justify their choices in alcohol consumption (Rolfe et al. 2009). Stigma can play a role in both women's alcohol use and domestic abuse. Erving Goffman's (1963) theorising of stigma stresses the differentiation between what he calls the normal and the stigmatised. People become stigmatised by revealing, through stigma signals, social information about them that is discrediting. This in turn causes others to re-evaluate the individual. In Goffman's terms carrying stigma indicates having a spoiled social identity. For some abused women the stigma signals may be a black eye, or for drinking women, it may a strong smell of alcohol or visible drunkenness.

Pleasure or pain

It is clear that we need to understand both the structural and individual influences that undermine or sustain women's drinking (Waterson 2000). The construction of women's drinking as a social problem is a product of sociohistorical constructions of femininity, therefore women's drinking can be considered as target of moral regulation practices based on gender (McErlain 2015). Despite the development of more egalitarian societies, women's alcohol use continues to emerge, disappear and then reappear as a focus of public concern, especially when the gender order is challenged (Thom 1994; Plant 1997). Continued scrutiny of young women's drinking consumption and styles has led to the development of a Gender Convergence hypothesis which links increases in women's drinking to increases in their social emancipation. However, studies in both Sweden (Bergmark 2004) and Scotland (Seaman and Edgar 2012) showed how separate discourses of femininity and masculinity remain evident and that any convergence of drinking consumption or patterns do not imply convergence of views on appropriate drinking behaviour.

Women have traditionally been associated with home and the private sphere and this has been reflected in the traditional drinking cultures of women centred in the home and the development of the pub as a distinctly masculine domain (Day et al. 2004). However Measham (2002) has highlighted a changing and complex relationship between women and alcohol. Young women are seen to have reaped

the benefits of feminism and appear to have access to an increased range of lifestyle choices. This has led to claims of the emergence of a post-feminist landscape, characterised by ideas of empowerment and choice, and reflecting a more individualised discourse (McRobbie 2009). These new freedoms are also considered attributable to social change in Western societies, characterised by a rise in neoliberalism. In the current form of neo-liberalism, individualism and personal responsibility are emphasised, and freedom is reflected by lifestyle choices made in the domain of consumption (Measham 2002; O'Malley and Valverde 2004; Braedley and Luxton 2010). The growth in women drinking outside of the home has led to claims of the feminisation of drinking culture, often portrayed in negative terms (Day et al. 2004). Griffin et al. (2013) also describe this as feminisation of the night-time economy and suggest that this, combined with a culture of intoxication, creates difficult dilemmas for women: as they negotiate a demand to look and act sexy within a night-time economy they must also “distance themselves from the image of the drunken slut” (Griffin et al. 2013, p. 199). As women are called upon to act as if they are free and liberated, their practices are still constrained by the limits of persistent gender hierarchies (Measham 2002). In these neoliberal cultures of intoxication women are urged to seek pleasure but simultaneously remain restrained and respectable, leaving them tangled in these competing discourses.

However, what appears to be a feminisation of drinking spaces is not necessarily related to women being more welcome in bars due to a more egalitarian society, as more part of the political economy of experience where changes are driven by the alcohol industry for profit and are supported by changes in law, politics and the environment (Bancroft 2009). Furthermore, power operates through the configuration of spaces with the design and operation of bars designed to encourage certain types of interaction. Bancroft (2009) explores how the design of the British pub has changed since the 1980s. In his analysis, he usefully draws upon Connell's (2009) gender theory to explore how every pub has its gender order. The traditional pub of the 1980's, and earlier, had a careful arrangement of regulars, all male and all known to staff who collectively would operate informal social controls by vetting new clientele who may threaten that order. This order segregated women into the designated 'lounge', furnished, more homely, with lower seating to be served feminine drinks in feminine glasses. If women wanted to get drunk they were meant

to do it in private or discreetly, although some took advantage of these lower surveillance spaces rather than risk transgressing into the territory of the bar where they were likely to be denigrated and viewed as prostitutes (Bancroft 2009). Valentine et al (2007, p. 45) identified a “gendered geography’ in how contemporary drinking spaces are shared by men and women. In this study, women’s drinking, particularly drunkenness, was viewed more negatively, with particular scorn reserved for older women drinking to excess. Furthermore, women reported still being segregated in unpleasant family spaces, while men were free to drink in the bar. Hey (1986) has suggested that men cope with the female presence by means of either segregation or abuse, both means of keeping women in their place.

The subsequent shift in the design of bars, and drinks, to make them more woman friendly; large windows, high ceilings, large selection of wines and cocktails, is argued as a strategy by the drinks industry responding to post-industrial deprivation and a loss of sales due to the rave scene. These redesigns attracting young professionals may be more gender balanced (Bancroft 2009), but despite claims of feminisation, they are still highly gendered and heterosexualised spaces (Nicholls 2016), where women face risks to their safety and are still subject to informal social control through norms of appropriate femininity and respectability (Brooks 2008).

Further feminist research has highlighted how heterosexual women sometimes choose the safe haven of gay bars to avoid and escape the threat of violence and “unremitting masculinity” of heterosexual public drinking spaces (Skeggs 2005, p.10).

As long as access to public space and the space to be public (including forms of citizenship) for women is controlled by the fear of straight male violence and as long as violent, gawking, entitled, dull heterosexual masculinity exists, straight women will look for places of avoidance (Skeggs, 1999, p.227).

In this context, male gay space has been found to offer those places of avoidance: spaces where women can escape the constant male gaze, a space to be invisible, away from constant evaluation and judgement (Skeggs 1999).

In recent years feminist theorists have drawn upon contemporary ideas of power presented in the work of philosopher Michel Foucault. While he makes few

references to women or to the issue of gender in his writings, his treatment of the relations between power, the body and sexuality has stimulated extensive feminist interest. However, a number of feminist theorists remain critical of Foucault's questioning of the categories of the subject and agency on the grounds that such questioning undermines the emancipatory aims of feminisms (Armstrong 2013, Deveaux 1994). Yet his work is useful here in multiple ways as it proposes that where there is power there is resistance, and supports the idea that any dominant discourse, whilst seeming normal or commonsensical is always susceptible to being replaced by another (Foucault 1995).

One of the key claims made in post-structuralist theory is that meaning is constituted through language (Gavey 2005). For Foucault, language is located in discourse; in turn discourses are organised systems of statements that provide socially understood ways for talking about something or acting. They are historically available ways of stating knowledge and truth, what it is possible to speak of at a given moment (Ramazanoglu 1993; Gavey 2005). Discourses are evident in both language and social practices and construct the objects to which they refer (Foucault 1972). They are multiple and therefore may offer contradictory ways of giving meaning to the world. It is also important to recognise that they are formed in particular ways within different cultural contexts, and at varying place and times. In turn, they offer subject positions for people to take up. Much of the power of discourses comes from their appeal to common sense or dominant cultural values, such as reason or science (Gavey 2005).

Feminist concerns have been raised that Foucault's ideas of power fail to take account of women's agency, which is considered a precondition for resistance. Bordo (1997, cited in Gavey 2005, p.90) attempts to make a clear distinction between agency and resistance: "whether our actions can be said to be autonomous or 'free' is distinct from the question of which of those actions can be said to 'resist' a social norm", and suggests that concerns over agency have been overstated. Gavey (2005) suggests that within Foucault's ideas can be found a liberatory potential of oppositional discourses to challenge traditional debates. At any point in time one discourse may be dominant, or hegemonic, and may be reflected in social institutions and practices but is always open to being challenged (Elizabeth 2003).

Despite feminist critique, Foucault's ideas of discourses, normalisation and resistance have been usefully applied in key areas of feminist work related to the subject of this thesis: the politics of the body (Bordo 1993), the social construction of rape (Gavey 2005), and leaving abusive partners (Elizabeth 2003). While Foucault's post-structuralist ideas may be epistemologically at odds with the structuralist underpinnings of this thesis, the significance of culture and discourse can be acknowledged without denying the impact of relations and structures on understandings of women's experiences (Allen 2012). Such an inclusive approach to theorising is also in keeping with the bricolage approach to the current study.

Discourses in society are powerful and pervasive and are regularly reinforced through the media with some stories reproducing and others challenging gender (Bogren 2011). Recent discourse analytic research suggests a mixed picture in which British women drinkers are presented as modern and cool, yet are simultaneously vilified (Rolfe et al. 2009). From a Foucauldian perspective, these can be considered as 'macro-level discourses' (Armstrong 2013), which construct and position women who drink. Such discourses also form the resources which are available to women to draw upon, modify or resist in their talk about their own drinking, and which they use in positioning themselves as subjects (Rolfe et al. 2009).

Women's drinking as a coping mechanism

Alcohol problems, far from being the price that women pay for emancipation, are frequently a rational response to their experience of a gender – differentiated society (Waterson 2000, p.6).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the emotional outcomes of domestic abuse on the victim include feelings of self blame, shame, stress, depression, fear, anxiety, isolation and loss of belief in an ability to cope independently as well as a negative impact on self esteem (Herman 1992; Stark 2007; Pain 2012 ; Braaf 2012 ; Devries et al. 2013). Similar outcomes and common themes can be found in women who experience problematic levels of alcohol use (Gomberg 1988; Ettorre 1992; Waterson 2000). For abused women alcohol may be an escape from the paradox of their lives where their actual feelings conflict with what they believe they should feel

(Ettorre 1992), but that escape through drinking may provide an extra dimension of control. In Rogers et al. (2003) case studies of three abused women who had gone on to recover from problematic alcohol use, women reported how alcohol provided an escape from the reality of their violent world, giving them a sense of control. This supports Stark's (2007) idea of women finding a way to gain control in a context of no control, even if this leads to subsequent self harm.

Women often struggle to make sense of what is happening to them, particularly when dealing with the Jekyll and Hyde nature of their abusers (Enander 2010), and the isolation tactics deployed in coercive control (Stark 2007). More generally, the concept of alcohol as a friend or even as a lover is commonly found in women's public narratives of recovery (Soberistas 2015). Researching older women's talk about the place of alcohol in their lives Barnes and Ward (2015) highlighted the importance of understanding the diverse meanings alcohol can have across the life span. Women reported how space for leisure and pleasure may open up as caring responsibilities diminish, but equally alcohol may also serve as a reminder of happier times, while simultaneously act to fill a gap in their lives. Studies of women in Scotland drinking in mid-life (Lyons et al. 2014; Emslie et al. 2015) identified how they worked to position themselves as respectable and responsible female drinkers whose drinking only took place after their responsibilities as workers, mothers and partners had been met. Lyons et al. (2014) also found women's drinking to be more strongly associated with their emotional and relational lives while men's drinking was linked to with their external, working lives, highlighting the gendered nature of relationships with alcohol.

The idea of alcohol as a coping mechanism, a form of self medication to deal with the troubles of life is widely accepted (Bancroft 2009). Johnston (2013) points out that we miss a major part of the story in many women's lives if we do not link drinking to the issue of self medication. Alcohol is readily and quickly available compared to a doctor's prescription or counselling session, and is on some levels socially acceptable (Galvani and Toft 2015). Quantitative psychological research by Peters et al. (2012), in a study of 212 community based women exposed to domestic abuse, looked at the impact of expectancies for alcohol and drugs to reduce tension. They reported that these were associated with more frequent use, more severe

problems and greater severity of abuse. However, Levy (1995, cited in Braaf 2012, p.5) points out that alcohol use in this way by abused women is a normal reaction to fearful and coercive situations that demonstrates strategies that may be more socially acceptable than asserting oneself or fighting back. Day et al. (2004) however, warns that this risks constructing the image of either the neurotic, self-medicating woman or the helpless vulnerable, though partially responsible, victim.

A question of control

Men's reputations derive from controlling women; women's reputations derive from controlling themselves (Hey 1986, p. 69).

Society expects women to be in control of themselves. In private, a woman who drinks too much is seen as an unfit mother or an irresponsible wife, and in public, as unforgivably out of control and not trustworthy (Ettorre 1992). In particular, the idea of loss of control has no place in our society's concept of motherhood (Otto 1980). In relation to women and alcohol in contemporary public space, Brooks (2009), in her study of young women's experiences of safety in bars, pubs and clubs highlighted how social control may operate by consent, through norms of respectability, in particular, through accepted standards of femininity and masculinity as defined through male hegemony. The public perception that women out of control through intoxication are responsible for their own victimisation persists. A White Ribbon Scotland (2013) attitude survey reported that 24.1% of young Scots (aged 16 – 24) believe rape victims are partly to blame if drunk or dressing provocatively, indicating a perpetuation of victim blaming associated with alcohol.

Alcohol as a tool for control

Women's alcohol use can also be used as a tool of control within abusive relationships in a number of ways. Agency data collated by Taylor (2005) from interviews with fifty one members, across multiple types of UK support services, suggested a professional view that using alcohol as a coping mechanism risks exacerbating a women's situation by creating increased dependency and vulnerability. This may allow the perpetrator's control to incrementally increase and impede the woman's ability at safety planning through impaired judgment. Nine of the services stated that perpetrators actively encouraged their partners to use drugs

or alcohol as a means of increasing control over them. The findings suggest that women may be reluctant and less able to seek help from formal sources and the stigma associated with both domestic abuse and alcohol use may also cause withdrawal from family and friends (Taylor 2005). The range of agencies gave a broad perspective that focused on identifying gaps in services and training and also incorporated much of its data at a general substance use category. The data show the value of gaining the perspective of professionals which was part of this project. However, limited research has explored survivors' own experiences of how deliberate coercion involving substance use and mental health can be a core part of an abusive relationship. Two coercion surveys, using responses of over three thousand callers to a domestic abuse helpline in the USA, identified regular substance use tactics such as force, pressure to use substances, and threats to report substance use to the authorities. Similarly, mental health tactics were reported where partners called them 'crazy' and did things deliberately to make them feel 'crazy', as well as undermining their credibility with others. The fear of not being believed created barriers to help seeking and the researchers highlight how stigma associated with substance use and mental health issues play a key role in allowing perpetrators to deploy these tactics successfully (Warshaw et al. 2014).

Mothering through domestic abuse

Support agencies can potentially become a source of further victimisation and blaming if the temporary coping strategy of alcohol becomes problematic, particularly if children are involved. Domestic abuse refuge policies vary in their acceptance of drinking women, and alcohol support agencies are less likely to engage with the issues of abuse, thereby neglecting what may be a fundamental link to their drinking behaviour (Galvani and Toft 2015). Even where domestic abuse is recognised, too much focus on the women's behaviour as victims leads to a perception that what they need is more treatment. Such an approach fails to consider "perpetrators' actions, the wider social and political control of women and, most importantly, how women cope with abuse on a daily basis and, in most cases, overcome it" (Radford and Hester 2006, pp. 16-17).

Mothers experiencing domestic abuse, regardless of whether alcohol is present, are particularly vulnerable to a range of strategies used by their partners to gain power

and control over them through their mothering. Women aged 30-59 with children in the home are three times more likely to experience domestic abuse than those without children (Mirlees-Black 1999). Common to these strategies are tactics to achieve maternal alienation; to deliberately undermine and destroy relationships between mothers and their children (Morris 2009), as well as a broader tactic of mother blaming; deflecting responsibility from abusive men and the derogation of women as mothers (Radford and Hester 2006). Researchers have identified two dominant gendered discourses that have been influential within families and across services; firstly a discourse that erases men's accountability for abuse yet inflates their importance as fathers, and secondly a discourse that positions mothers as responsible for all problems within families while making invisible their efforts as primary carers of children (Radford and Hester 2006; Morris 2009). The salience of gender in these discourses has been usefully highlighted through different but overlapping frameworks. Recognising that even when children are not directly targeted, there are multiple ways in which they may be harmed, Morris (2009, p. 415) draws upon gender theorist Connell's (2009) notion of gender regimes to identify the "abusive household gender regime (AHGR)", a micro social context in which gender operates: a patriarchy in miniature. Maternal alienation is made possible in this environment by the web of entrapment created by the male abuser who therefore claims the power to define reality. His self serving distortion of events often takes the form of a moral tale, positioning the abuser as the victim and the mother as morally deficient and creates the conditions where women and children may doubt their own experiences and sanity (Morris 2009). These clearly reflect the broader conditions of coercive control where the abuser defines reality as conditions of entrapment intensify (Stark 2007; Williamson 2010). Highlighting these conditions helps us see what makes this form of abuse possible.

The idea of entrapment can also be useful at a societal level to explore how certain groups of women may be set up to fail, for example mothers. Radford and Hester (2006) drew upon a body of their own research studies since the 1980s into domestic violence, child abuse and child contact with violent fathers, to explore aspects of mothering through domestic violence. Beth Richie's notion of gender entrapment (Richie 1995, cited in Radford and Hester 2006, p.28) is an explanatory framework for why some black African - American women living in poverty may turn

to crime because they are marginalised by their intersectional disadvantages. This concept was used to examine the marginalisation of abused women as mothers due to unrealistic societal expectations of all mothers. They identified a broad range of strategies used to undermine mothers both within the relationship and beyond, for example; emotional abuse, mother blaming, isolation, threats to harm children, control over domestic labour, forced witnessing, using institutions (law, welfare agencies) and economic abuse. Overburdening women by setting impossible standards and rules for household tasks and child care make it impossible for women to succeed and leaves them open to the abuser shifting blame onto them for the abuse; mother blaming. The researchers also highlighted the expectation for mothers to provide adequate emotionally attached fathers while societal expectations of fathers involvement in care remain minimal, leaving it up to the mother to negotiate his parenting role in an abusive situation where she has little or no power. Mothers are therefore seen as fully responsible, while their space for action is severely diminished (Radford and Hester 2006). Work by Lapierre (2010) has also emphasised how women are left with more responsibility and less control over their mothering in this context. An abused woman may therefore be judged as to be a failure as a wife and mother, who has failed to prevent her own victimisation (Galvani and Toft 2015). However, where women are drinking, rather than receiving help women often receive censure and in turn may risk being viewed as unworthy of help (Waterson 2000).

Summary

This review of the literature highlights a lack of empirical work exploring the subject of alcohol and domestic abuse from a woman survivor's perspective. The body of work focusing on male perpetrator's drinking and linking it to their acts of violence reinforces the violence paradigm, risking neglecting issues of power and control. Furthermore, striving to find direct causal explanations has led to various contested theories, primarily based on assumptions about the disinhibiting effect of alcohol, with limited consideration of cultural factors. Little consideration has been given to how women experience alcohol in this context. The broader literature on women and alcohol has not only highlighted how women and alcohol use has historically been problematised through a moral double standards discourse of femininity and

appropriate behavior, but also how such discourses persist in both private and public domains.

Feminists have called for a woman-sensitive approach to researching women and alcohol and have consistently stressed the gendered nature of both men and women's relationship with alcohol. Despite being accused of ignoring the topic of alcohol and domestic abuse, for fear of excusing perpetrator responsibility (blame the drink), feminists have challenged such discourses. Understandings of the role of alcohol for women experiencing domestic abuse has previously been limited, by being over simplified as a self medicating, or coping mechanism. There is therefore a need to create a more nuanced understanding of women's own alcohol use through a lens of gender.

Overall, this review of the literature highlights the need for an in-depth qualitative analysis of women's subjective experience of their alcohol use within a domestic abuse context using a gendered analysis. Enabling women to make sense of their experiences in a group setting offered an opportunity to have their voices heard and to explore the wider societal power structures that impact on their experiences. These were the aims of the current project with the potential to benefit other survivors', professional, and public understandings of the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use. The following chapter outlines the overall research design and rationale for the methodology and approach.

Chapter Three

Research Strategy and Design

Methodology chapters within research reports can have a tendency to be highly formal and written completely in the passive voice (Silverman 2013). As part of an overall qualitative research project that depends upon individual stories and subjective experiences I therefore aim to present this chapter as more of a natural history of my research. Through a mix of formal and narrative approaches this chapter will provide the rationale for the chosen research strategy and design. It will also explore the interconnections between choices of epistemology, methodology and method and how they were informed by my personal and political positions. It will then outline the process of data collection and analysis that provided the basis for the findings of this study.

Prior to embarking upon the body of this chapter it is worth revisiting the primary aims and objectives of the research, which were to examine abused women's perspectives on the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use. This was achieved by not only looking at where alcohol use had been defined as abusive or problematic but by examining the part played by alcohol in their everyday lives. Taking this approach also allowed for inclusion of a perspective that regards women's drinking as normal and pleasurable: a rational choice within the context of their particular material and social situations. It included studying women's alcohol use as a constructive and autonomous response to their lives as they balanced multiple risks against each other, a particularly important consideration in relation to domestic abuse where autonomy may be severely compromised.

Feminist research

Feminist research is politically *for* women; feminist knowledge has some grounding in women's *experiences* and in how it *feels* to live in unjust gendered relationships (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, p.16).

The current qualitative study is primarily about the subjective experiences of women survivors of domestic abuse and is underpinned by contemporary feminist theories

outlined previously in Chapter Two. More specifically it is informed by a feminist theoretical perspective that views the problem of domestic abuse as a result of patriarchy and gendered power structures that allow some men a sense of entitlement to control women's lives (Dobash and Dobash 1998; DeKeseredy 2011). While feminism is not a unified project, in that there are multiple theoretical feminisms, it is both theory and practice, with feminist researchers aiming to produce useful knowledge, driven by political commitment aimed at social and individual change (Letherby 2003). Feminist approaches to research can be identified mainly by their theories of power and gender. But this does not mean that feminist research must solely study women or gender or assume that women are never involved in abuses of power. Kelly et al. (1994) also make the important point that to understand oppression we must aim to understand how it is structured and reproduced. As feminist research focuses on how women's lives are constrained by the actions of men individually and collectively as well as the strategies of resistance, male dominance and masculinity are implicitly part of the research. Additionally, research projects can also be considered feminist if they are underpinned by feminist theory and aim to produce knowledge that will contribute to tackling problems of gendered injustice (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002).

Feminist epistemology and methodology

While it may be generally accepted that there is a distinctly feminist mode of enquiry there is ongoing debate about what this might involve. Harding (1987) has highlighted that confusion exists around the terminology central to that debate, and argues that a lack of clarity around the use of terms such as method, methodology and epistemology have impeded feminists in their justifications for a feminist approach. A key aspect of the debate surrounds whether there is a feminist epistemology. As a theory of knowledge, epistemology answers questions about who can be the knower and therefore what counts as knowledge; can subjective 'truths' count as knowledge? Feminists have challenged traditional epistemologies of science, and the scientific method, as being androcentric and distorted by sexism, and have proposed alternative theories of knowledge that legitimate women as knowers (Harding 1987; Maguire 2000).

Of most relevance to this project has been the development of a feminist standpoint epistemology, one that argues that experience should be the starting point for knowledge production, and in particular, stresses the need to theorise the social world from the perspective of women. The women's movement recognised the need for knowledge for women, as women had long been the object of others' knowledge projects (Harding 2004). Additionally, such an approach made the personal political, while traditional androcentric approaches diminished the personal (Letherby 2003). At the core of standpoint epistemology is the assertion that the world is represented from a specific socially situated perspective, as opposed to a view from nowhere espoused by a traditional approach. A number of key characteristics of a feminist standpoint are crucial to the aims of this study. Firstly, how it explores relations between knowledge and power, as women 'speaking their truth' are situated in relation to forms of power that shape their lives. Secondly, the way in which it is grounded in women's experiences, emotions and embodiment as they voice their reality (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). Finally, its recognition of the role of group consciousness in the construction of knowledge (Harding 2004).

However, the development of feminist poststructuralism as a further feminist epistemology has taken issue with the concept of standpoint. Poststructural feminist thinking accused structuralist theories of falsely universalising women's experiences, taking issue with the category of woman. Furthermore, it argued that structural theories based on patriarchy failed to recognise women as active agents, positioning them as passive victims of societal structures, and under-theorised the intersectionality of gender with other forms of inequality (Weedon 1997; Letherby 2003). This cultural or linguistic turn shifted some feminist work away from ideology, or material concerns, to a focus on culture and discourse, seeing consciousness as socially produced in language (Weedon 1997). Jackson (2001) has in turn highlighted how such work, focusing on diversity of women culturally, risks rendering invisible real material inequalities in women's lives. She argues that "if we neglect the structural, material dimensions of social life, we may risk valorising differences that are products of oppression and inequality" (Jackson 2001, p. 286). In particular, she argues that a cultural construction of gender omits its structural, hierarchical dimension sustained through divisions, such as the heterosexual marriage contract and the division of labour (Jackson 2001). Despite such concerns, particular aspects

of post-structuralist feminism are useful to the current study, as per the discussion on Foucault and discourse in the previous chapter. Being vigilant to the strengths and weaknesses of these different perspectives enables an inclusive approach.

It is clear there are problems and tensions within these alternative approaches. However, the focus and aims of this study invited a feminist methodology that enables us to challenge a previous masculine focus on alcohol and domestic abuse by foregrounding women's experiences. Additionally the regulatory and invisible nature of domestic abuse presents particular challenges for researchers. A feminist approach that abandons the mythology of hygienic research and enables personal involvement can go some way to providing insight. As Oakley (2005, p. 231) argues "Personal involvement is more than dangerous bias: it is the condition under which people come to know each other and admit others into their lives". Ground breaking work by Ann Oakley in the 1970s critiqued the traditional social science textbook approach that assumed a masculine model ingrained with claims to objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and science, directed purely at gathering data. In doing so, this model subordinates the role of interviewees and neglects emotions. Rejection of this model when interviewing women can present sociological research as a way of giving the subjective situation of women greater visibility. However, having interviewed women survivors of domestic abuse in my previous research I was keen to go further and adopt a more participatory approach. I knew I wanted the women's voices to be heard, but also for them to have more control and involvement in the production of knowledge. This led me to favour a collaborative methodology and related method.

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

Action research was deemed appropriate for this study as it aims to bring together theory, method, and practice through collaborative working leading to practical outcomes and new forms of understanding (Frisby et al. 2009). It is argued that feminist theorising and practice is a relatively unacknowledged force at the heart of participatory forms of action research. At its core, action research is about challenging and unsettling entrenched and invisible power arrangements and therefore shares many of the social change goals of feminist research (Maguire 2000). Therefore, a specifically Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

framework was chosen which, Reid et al. (2006) highlight, seeks to facilitate the co-production of knowledge to change the conditions of women's lives, both individually and collectively. This knowledge can inform both theory and practice (Koch and Kralik 2006), whilst challenging entrenched and sometimes invisible, power arrangements in everyday relationships and structures (Frisby et al. 2009).

Critically for this project, FPAR blends participatory action research and critical feminist theory by advocating that the women must be actively involved in all stages of the research process (Letherby 2003; Reid et al. 2006), although the extent to which this ideal can be achieved is debatable. Involving participants as co-researchers has been a feminist influence on action research in an effort to flatten power structures in the research process (Maguire 2006). All action researchers face the challenge of this ideal, but as a solo PhD student with limited resources, I took a pragmatic approach by aiming to be as collaborative as possible within the practical constraints. At a feminist conference in 2013 the revered feminist philosopher Sandra Harding stood on a stage before me and said she would never let a PhD student attempt a PAR project. One key objection was that the requirements of a doctoral project would immediately compromise the principle that the participating community should decide on the topic or issue. Herr and Anderson (2015) highlight that setting the research topic may depend on your position as an insider or outsider to the collaborative partner, and that the motivation of outsiders initiating action research projects goes beyond a desire to generate knowledge. In turn, this often leads to an activist stance framed around a desire to make a difference to the setting researchers study. This may also include a critique of the status quo, a desire to avoid exploitation or a wish to give something back to participants. These aims were indeed at the forefront of my motivation to do more than just benefit myself and my dissertation, and the collaborative partners strongly agreed on the relevance of my research topic. Participatory research also requires a considerable commitment of time and self on the part of researcher as well as participants (Herr and Anderson 2015). The project required me to juggle multiple roles; involved actor, participant, researcher, organiser, negotiator, exhibitor and facilitator. It was important to recognise these roles from the beginning, not to render them invisible (Maguire 2000), but this left limited space for involving participants in the later analysis phase which was followed by the lone act of writing up. Yet, the challenges involved in PhD

students performing action research may be as much about the tension between traditional academic requirements of doctoral study and the flexible, fluid and activist nature of action research.

The metaphor of 'voice' is also common to both feminist and action research, sharing the idea that to listen to people is to empower them. Yet as researchers we must be aware that even in our privileged positions we do not 'give voice' to those in less powerful positions, but we do need to be part of the process of breaking down the barriers for speakers and listeners (Maguire 2000). Therefore, this idea of voice and the minimising of power in the research relationship was at the core of the choice of research method discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

Research design

As the overall project combined multiple methods, emergent design decisions, multiple data sources and a need for flexibility in response to the developing research context, the approach taken can be considered a form of bricolage. Bricolage research as conceptualised by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) can be identified by its critical stance and multiplicity of approaches to methodology, theory and perspective (Rogers 2012). In its most simple terms, this approach uses the analogy of a form of quilt making; weaving together a set of varied resources and techniques to represent a complex situation. More than simply multi-methods research, it is about the way the researcher uses the tools of her craft in a responsive and creative way depending upon context, including what is available and what the researcher can do in that setting. This, in turn, introduces the idea of seeing the qualitative researcher as a methodological bricoleuse in accomplishing meaning-making in a fluid and eclectic way (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). The remainder of this chapter will outline how a range of voices, perspectives and narratives were drawn together to make sense of women's experiences of alcohol and domestic abuse.

The overall project consisted of two parallel studies. The lived experience of the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use was the primary component of the research. Focusing on the role that alcohol played in the everyday lives of abused women, the participants were asked to consider not only where their alcohol use may have been deemed problematic, by themselves or others, but also to consider

the space for leisure or pleasure. This was approached from a perspective that regards women's drinking as normal and pleasurable, a rational choice within the context of their particular material and social situation. This study was achieved via the visual research method of Photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997), a participatory method involving participants creating photographs that represent the reality of their lives that are then critically analysed in a group setting. The full details of this approach are discussed as we progress through this chapter.

The second parallel study consisted of semi-structured interviews to collect the views and experiences of ten professional stakeholders drawn from a range of domestic abuse support agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who provide alcohol support. I was interested in how much professionals in contact with women experiencing domestic abuse had an understanding, or awareness, of women's alcohol use, and similarly interested in the perspective of stakeholders in alcohol support services. The stakeholders were asked for their views of the role that alcohol plays for women living in a domestic abuse context, drawing upon their professional and, if applicable, personal experiences. Semi-structured interviews were deployed as they allowed me to retain a list of issues and questions to be addressed whilst at the same time being flexible and allowing the interviewee to elaborate on what they considered important (Denscombe 2010). Such interviews are also considered an emotionalist approach appropriate for qualitative research that aims to access experience and feelings (Silverman 2013). The interview schedule was loosely guided by, but not restricted to, themes from the literature such as disclosure, narratives of fear, shame, self-blame and access to support services. In reality, each stakeholder prioritised different aspects related to their own practice and sometimes personal experiences. As I have discovered, through this and previous research, it is common in such agencies for many support staff to be survivors of abuse, or be in recovery themselves.

The overall research strategy therefore involved collation of data of different types, from different sources and via multiple methods: photos created by participants, existing media photos used to inspire group dialogue, individual and group testimony from survivors, individual interview data from stakeholders, reflexive field notes, and both participant and audience feedback from an exhibition of the final photographs.

It is important to acknowledge that the design was also influenced by my own values and ideals (Letherby 2003). As a female and feminist social scientist researcher, I recognised the importance of situating myself in the research process and therefore rejected any claims to researcher objectivity associated with the traditional scientific method (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). Mills (1959 cited in Letherby 2003, p.8) points out that “the social scientist is not an autonomous being outside of society, as nobody is outside society. What matters is where the researcher stands within it.” I came to this project directly from my undergraduate research examining domestic abuse as a liberty crime. The process of interviewing women who had experienced domestic abuse was a deeply moving and emotional one. I also carried with me a personal and family history of domestic abuse, and had experienced the associated silencing of both survivors and family members. Although I have examined and rejected the notion that research in this area was a personal therapeutic project, I am very self aware and acknowledge the personal and political learning that continues throughout my work. I embarked on this project as a domestic abuse study from a feminist perspective but the alcohol sub-topic arose from two other learning experiences. These were the role of alcohol in the story of one of my undergraduate research participants, and a training event at Scottish Women’s Aid. This event questioned the widespread acceptance of the disinhibiting effects of alcohol as a simplistic explanation for violence, highlighting alternative theories. Raising awareness of the power of the ‘blame the drink’ discourse made me challenge my own taken for granted beliefs about alcohol.

Method

Visual Methods

As argued by Collier (1967, p 118) ‘photographs are charged with psychological and highly emotional elements and symbols . . . [which] allows the native reader to express his [sic] ethos.’ In this sense, we have moved away from the task of documenting the social world to using images as tools via a dialogical process to gain an insight into the lifeworlds of those who participate in our studies. (Prosser and Loxley 2008, p.19)

In approaching the research from a feminist theoretical perspective, this project employed a feminist standpoint methodology that does not add women to the picture but begins from our perspective (Letherby 2003). This analogy of the picture connects to the choice of a visual method for the women survivors' study. I knew I wanted the women's voices to be heard and for them to have more control and involvement in the production of knowledge.

The growing use of visual methods in sociology can offer an alternative to the hegemony of words and numbers based research that can help reflect more fully on the diversity of human experience. Equally, such methods are argued as offering more creative and diverse possibilities for the advancement of knowledge (Prosser and Loxley 2008). In this context the term visual is not about the object in and of itself, but relates to the meanings and ideas attributed to it (Prosser 2011). Of the two forms most commonly used, visual elicitation involves using photos or other visual artefacts in a research interview, while Photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997) and its variants facilitate participants in the creation of the images. Both approaches lay claim to participants feeling less pressured by discussing sensitive topics through intermediary artefacts (Prosser 2011). Where images are produced by the participants, they have the opportunity to express what is meaningful to them, which may include the unsayable, or topics for which the words are not available to express the raw emotions experienced (Guillemin and Drew 2010). Of equal importance, the process of image production and selection creates a reflective time and space in contrast to the immediate response required by other research methods, such as interviews. Photovoice also goes further than qualitative interviews by offering multiple occasions for participants to share their experiences (Lorenz 2010). Furthermore, it has been suggested as a unique way in to a research question, generating an alternative kind of response by engaging the brain in a different way (Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006). While it is easy to stress the advantages of participant-created images it should be remembered the challenges and risks that participants face. People's everyday photo images generally conform to certain cultural ideas such as a happy family and a comfortable life, therefore painful experiences and interpersonal conflict have no place in this construction of life (Chalfen 2008).

While storytelling can be a transformative tool for oppressed groups it may also be risk-laden. Assumptions may be made by people in positions of power that marginalised individuals would grasp any opportunity to tell their stories. Yet, what Holtby et al. (2015, p. 319) call “this disclosure imperative” may carry an element of risk where their stories are laid open to inspection, judgement and potential appropriation. Story-tellers, while challenging dominant narratives, may also face pressure to make their story more socially acceptable in the face of the power of the audience, who decide what stories are taken up or not (Charania 2005, cited in Holtby et al. 2015, p.319). While creating stories that can be ‘seen’ as well as heard may constitute powerful social justice work, placing one’s stories of oppression, in this case revealing individual control and abuse, may be a risky tactic for the storyteller. It therefore requires consideration of both the potential for transformative power and the risk of harm to the storytellers (Holtby et al. 2015). Parkin (2014) usefully reminds us that just because visual methods are in fashion and relatively easy to use does not mean they should be applied just because we can. In turn, he emphasises the need for a humanistic research framework that forefronts compassion, respect and dignity. This ethos was encapsulated in the overall design of this project, encompassing very specific ethical considerations surrounding both visual research and research with domestic abuse survivors, discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Photovoice

Within the FPAR framework, Photovoice, an established participatory action research method developed by Wang and Burris (1997) and commonly deployed in health research as a means of personal and community change, was chosen. It offered a voice to often ‘silenced women’ through a democratic research process. It also had the potential for empowerment through facilitating participants in the production of photographs with accompanying narrative autonomy that portrayed their own lived experience, and the co-production of knowledge through a group analysis of these photographs. In the Wang and Burris (1997, p. 381) context the “acronym VOICE – voicing our individual and collective experiences” represents the group discussion around the photographs, highlighting how the photographs must only be considered within the context of the women’s narrative and voices. Through

the Photovoice group process the participants were encouraged to find confidence in their own voices by engaging in critical analysis and reflection that enabled them to move from their personal experiences to an understanding of social forces that impact those experiences (Wang and Burris 1997). From this position there was an opportunity to identify, individually and collectively, issues and potential actions for change.

Since their original research work with women in rural China (Wang and Burris 1997) the Photovoice method has been used across a range of community and health related areas internationally. Projects, both community driven and academic, have explored a range of lived experiences; chronic pain (Baker and Wang 2006), young people with chronic disease (Drew et al. 2010), housing and poverty (Ponic and Jategaonkar 2010), a reimagining of place in Belfast (Mcintyre 2003) and domestic abuse in the USA (Frohmann 2005). Although advocated as an appropriate research method into domestic abuse by the World Health Organisation (Ellsberg and Heise 2005) no evidence of such an application could be found in Scotland at the outset of this project. However, indicative of the growing recognition of the value of the method, a recent collaborative project in Scotland explored the impact of austerity on domestic abuse survivors' ability to rebuild their lives (Scottish Women's Aid 2015).

Careful consideration was given to the choice of Photovoice within an FPAR framework. I was aware of the challenge of using such a method with a hard-to-reach group and the commitment of time and energy that was required by participants. However, I chose this on the basis that it had the potential to provide a richness of data and a potentially empowering experience for the participants.

Theoretical underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings of Photovoice are provided by Paulo Freire's (1996) approach to education for critical consciousness, combined with critical feminist theory, and a community approach to documentary photography. This opens up the possibility of counter-narratives that challenge hegemonic views (Wang and Burris 1997). It was this raising of critical consciousness, conscientization: a process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality (Freire 1996) which opened up the potential for the action part of this project. Using his form of problem posing

education, Freire recognised that one means of enabling this critical discussion was through the visual image; using drawings for cultural circle discussion. In her critique of the androcentric nature of action research Maguire (2000) criticised how the drawings used in Freire's group dialogue focused upon 'man in the world', suggesting that only men create culture, leaving women out of the picture, additionally by focusing on domination yet ignoring men's domination of women. Feminist bell hooks (1994) also critiqued sexism in his language and problematised a phallogocentric paradigm of liberation as a source of anguish but argued feminists should not let a blind spot prevent us from learning from his insights. Nonetheless, this approach of using visual images as objects to be decoded, objects that represented situations that others could relate to (Freire 1996), was of fundamental value to allowing the critical dialogue to take place in the groups. Affinity can also be seen between this process and the power of the historical consciousness-raising of the women's movement, as well as the importance of group consciousness in the production of knowledge in critical feminist theory (Harding 2004). Through the Photovoice group process, the participants were encouraged to find confidence in their own voices by engaging in critical analysis and reflection that enabled them to move from their personal experiences to an understanding of social forces that impacted those experiences.

Photovoice model

As the process for this method was less well established within Queen Margaret university than other standard methods, there was a requirement at the design and ethical approval stage to draw upon the existing Photovoice literature to define an outline process model for this particular study. Three main phases are summarised below but the expanded model can be found in Appendix A.

Photovoice sessions

Each session was scheduled to last for two hours and five sessions took place for the initial group. The introductory group session was key to orienting the participants to the research topic, the Photovoice research process and setting their expectations as participants. Safety, confidentiality and respect was discussed and agreed as a group as it was critical to develop collective trust. This was carried out by the

creation of a group contract, the contents of which were determined by the group collectively. Initial concerns expressed by the women were about their ability to take 'good enough' photos and what to photograph. I stressed that what was important was not technical ability but their choice of content that should reflect what was meaningful to them. I reassured the women that this was not a photographic competition and checked they were comfortable with their ability to take photos with their chosen technology. It was important not to assume that everyone had access to digital resources. I therefore made digital cameras available but only two took up the offer while everybody else used their own personal mobile phones that incorporated cameras and the ability to transfer the photos by e-mail. Printed photo examples from previous studies covering a variety of topics were used to give participants some ideas of how to approach the task. These included approaches that were metaphorical, literal and staged and included the captions provided by the original creators. This approach proved to be particularly useful, inspired ideas and appeared to relax the participants. A single sheet hand-out of prompts was provided to act as a guide on the aim of the project once participants were away from the group (Appendix B). I also provided journal style books and pens to encourage the women to capture their thoughts and reflections in relation to the photos and process. I stressed that these were for their own personal private use and optional.

The women were encouraged to consider photographing spaces, places, objects and other phenomena that represent their experiences and feelings of alcohol use within a domestic abuse setting. It had been suggested to me at ethical approval that I should consider instructing them not to include people (self or others) but I felt that this compromised the ethos of the project; empowerment and autonomy. It was more important that we fully discussed questions of the power and responsibility of the photographer; informed consent, ethics and the safety implications of doing so. What was striking by the end of the project was how several of the women chose to place themselves in a clearly identifiable way as the subject of their photographs. The implications of this in terms of lack of anonymity in resultant research publications were revisited several times, but the women were adamant that this was part of them standing up and being seen and heard; finding their voice. The participants were instructed to take as many photos as they wished but to select four photos that most represented their experiences to talk around at the next group session. This was the

start of the selection process as well as a practical limitation to allow time for each person to talk through their images.

Each subsequent session began with checking-in on how everyone was feeling about the process and their experiences so far. The focus of these sessions is defined as a three-stage process of a selecting, contextualising and codifying (Wang and Burris 1999). Selecting involved the participants deciding which photos to bring to the discussion. Contextualising involved each person talking about their chosen photos and what they mean to them. Wang and Burris (1999 p. 188) recommend a prompting technique based around the acronym **SHOWeD**:

What do you See here?

What is really Happening here?

How does this relate to Our lives?

Why does this situation, concern or strength exist?

What can we Do about it?

However, this has been rejected by some participants in previous studies as being too restrictive (Mcintyre 2003). This was also quickly rejected by the participants in the current study as being too structured and restrictive, and they decided it was better to have the freedom to do it in their own way. I was not overly concerned about this decision as I wanted the participants to feel in control. This meant adopting more fluid, inductive process of dialogue in which I attempted to pick up leads from the participants and guide the discussion between descriptive, reflective and analytical components. This is described more fully below as ‘the role of the researcher’.

The third documented stage of codifying involved entering into dialogue as a group, with the researcher facilitating the process to develop themes from the issues that arose from the photos and narratives. Although I facilitated this discussion, it was key that the themes and messages came from the women’s voices. These steps were repeated for each group of photographs. The Photovoice literature is non-specific about this part of the process. However, by drawing directly upon Paulo

Freire's (1996) methodology of thematic investigation, the photographs were treated as coded representations of lived experiences that can be decoded through systematic interrogation. The generative themes that arose from participant's thinking of their reality were explored through further dialogue. This aspect of the process was much more fluid than a documented process implies, requiring flexibility and the ability to respond to the needs of the groups. Ultimately, the groups focused on issues that most concerned them and had framed their experiences. These arose as we widened out the discussion to societal attitudes to women and alcohol and women and domestic abuse.

The final session with the primary group was used to allow the women to review their individual transcripts and choose which words, titles or captions they wanted to accompany each photograph. This was also used to revisit the implications for use of the photos and captions in potential future publications and gave the participants an opportunity to withdraw photographs if they wanted. In particular, it focused on planning for a photographic exhibition at a local civic event to launch new funding for a number of services in the local area. The event would be attended by politicians, police and advocacy groups. This was a major achievement for the women, and all photographs submitted by the group were enthusiastically put forward for inclusion in the exhibition, and in future publications.

Collaborative partner

My approach was to partner with professionals and non-governmental organisations who provide domestic abuse and alcohol support services but I also tried to recruit on a wider basis in an attempt to reach the hidden population of women who have not required to, or have chosen not to, access support agencies. One reason for this was that I recognised from my involvement with survivors that women who have accessed support agencies may have adopted a certain narrative. Accessing specialist domestic abuse services exposes women to alternative explanations for their experiences, for example, in relation to blame and responsibility. This perspective may then become evident in women's talk. A range of potential organisations, NGOs and community projects were approached. Recruitment attempts were made through a combination of strategies: face to face consultations with agencies to act as partners and gate-keepers, a recruitment poster, a flyer,

research networks, and potentially snowball - sampling. A copy of the recruitment flyer can be found in Appendix C. I had built up some contacts in the domestic abuse sector in the last few years due to an active interest in gender justice and attendance at education events, seminars and conferences, building on the experience of carrying out my undergraduate dissertation project in domestic abuse in 2012-2013. Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) is the umbrella organisation for the network of regional women's aid groups who offer support and refuge for women and children experiencing domestic abuse throughout Scotland. Dissemination of my recruitment literature through their network was anticipated to be my strongest hope of recruitment. However, after a period of no responses, it was to be a referral from a professional in another area that put me in touch with a regional group, Women's Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML) (<http://www.womensaideml.org/>) who became my collaborative partner. My knowledge and ongoing engagement with the women's aid network also confirmed that we held a common feminist theoretical approach to the problem of domestic abuse.

While I acknowledge that collaborating with a Women's Aid group could be argued as a limitation of the study, with only a subset of women ever accessing this type of service: it simultaneously provided a crucial ethical safety net of professional support for the participants. It should be stressed that the ethos of the project was one of safety and autonomy with all decisions being made through this particular lens (Ponic and Jategaonkar 2012).

Study area

The participants were mainly recruited through the collaborative partner Women's Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML) who provide information, support and accommodation to women in children mainly from the Scottish counties of East Lothian and Midlothian. Table 1 below shows, from their latest annual report, the level of support they provide in the region:

Women and Child Referrals & Refuge	Women	Children
Number of new referrals	354	210
Number supported by WAEML	521	289
Number of refuge requests	90	97
Number supported in accommodation	67	48

Table 1: Number of referrals, and refuge statistics, for Women's Aid East and Midlothian in 2014/15 (WAEML 2016)

These local authorities in the East of Scotland, close to the city of Edinburgh, consist of many small towns and villages with a mixed socio-demographic profile. The combined area is a mixed picture, predominantly rural, but with a historical industrial heritage in coal mining that has now declined. While there is not a single drinking culture in Scotland, it is often noted that as a nation we are drinking too much. The 2014 Scottish Health Survey found that nearly 1 in 4 men (23%) and around 1 in 6 (17%) women drink at harmful or hazardous levels (defined as men drinking more than 21 units per week and women drinking more than 14 units per week). (Scottish Government 2015b). In East Lothian and Midlothian, data showed that 29% of men consumed more than 21 units per week, and 18% of women consumed more than

14 units per week (MELDAP 2016), and so both these figures were higher than the Scottish average.

Relationship building

I was well aware from my previous research experience that accessing participants regarding sensitive topics is often “dependent on the role of gatekeepers who must be persuaded of the value and ethics of your research”(Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, p. 147). Therefore, I anticipated having to persuade my collaborative partners not only of the overall benefit of the research but the value of using the more innovative, but equally challenging, method of Photovoice. Fortunately, they were very open to the value of creative methods believing they helped to empower their service users. This was apparent from a range of artistic work displayed on their premises generated by previous workshops. An initial period of relationship building with the manager and the main substance abuse support worker from July 2014 onwards led to me working closely with them in planning the recruitment of participants and the Photovoice sessions which commenced in October 2014.

The role of the support workers was critical to this recruitment process as they had already built up trust with the women using the service and had knowledge of their backgrounds. But WAEML also had an active service users group open to all within the service which was fluid in its ongoing membership, but active in shaping the service and empowering members. I initially had the chance to meet some of them at the Annual General Meeting where I was invited to talk about my research, leave recruitment flyers and chat over lunch.

Recruitment

Photovoice group 1

Seeking richness of data and manageability of group discussions, the aim was for a sample size of between seven and ten women to work as a group as recommended by Wang and Burris (1999). Participants were chosen purposefully rather than randomly and were criterion based; I was seeking participants over eighteen who had experienced domestic abuse within a heterosexual relationship and for whom alcohol featured in their lives during that period. A purposive sampling technique is

appropriate when the researcher has some knowledge of the phenomenon and deliberately selects particular people most likely to have the experience to offer valuable insights (Denscombe 2010). Ideally the women should no longer be in an abusive situation. One option would have been to set a time criterion of how long a woman has been out of such a relationship (e.g. one year), but this approach was rejected as it is known that abuse and harassment can continue for a period of time after a woman leaves (Stark 2007). This became evident during the Photovoice group sessions as women talked of continued harassment, with one experiencing texts and calls during our sessions, despite them being eight years apart and the perpetrator being subject to repeated restraining orders. Others talked of ongoing custody and court hearings that continued for years. Furthermore, Ponc and Jategaonkar (2012), in their creation of ethical protocols specifically for Photovoice research with women who have experienced violence, suggest that creating such an arbitrary rule takes control away from women to decide what is safe for them. An alternative is to specify that women need to be out of immediate danger and have a safety plan in place. As all women initially recruited were users of the Women's Aid service and had a nominated support worker it was agreed that this requirement was covered. The women participating in the secondary Photovoice group were equally under the care of a nominated support worker. It should be stressed that the ethos throughout this project was one of balancing safety and autonomy with all decisions being made through this particular lens (Ponc and Jategaonkar 2012).

The topic of domestic abuse alone is a highly sensitive one associated with stigma, shame and secrecy. Adding alcohol as a dimension to the research topic, in particular a focus on women's alcohol use, proved to make recruitment extremely difficult and would have been almost impossible without the efforts of the gatekeepers and support workers. The negative focus on abused women's drinking was recently reported by Gilchrist and colleagues (2014) as a potential barrier to participation in their research for fear of engaging in a process of potential victim blaming.

The recruitment through WAEML generated initially seven participants but one withdrew after the introductory session before creating any data. Five Photovoice group sessions took place between October 2014 and March 2015. Initially attempts

were made to operate on a fortnightly basis but the dates had to be regularly rescheduled in response to participant availability. One woman joined the group at the final session where we had moved on to planning for a photo exhibition. As she had already created photographs, and was very keen to be part of the project, her photos were included in the exhibition. I then used a photo elicitation approach where we held a one-to-one session, using the photographs to drive the interview. All Photovoice and the photo elicitation sessions were audio recorded with permission of the women and fully transcribed by myself. The photographs were stored electronically on the secure university storage system. The primary group contributed a collection of nineteen photographs, this constituted only the photos that participants selected to bring to discuss with the group. One woman withdrew her original photos after an initial discussion and replaced them with a different set. Any other photos taken by participants that were not shared were not included as data. Not all participants attended all sessions.

Photovoice group 2

It should be noted that in June 2015, a second Photovoice group was formed as a result of a referral and recommendation by a participant in the original WAEML group who enthusiastically advocated for the method to another NGO that she was involved with. Planning for this group started in January 2015 in collaboration with the community charity CARR GOMM in the East of Edinburgh but despite the enthusiasm and confidence of the support worker, recruitment from the community proved extremely difficult and it took until June 2015 to initiate the first session. Initially three participants started, but one withdrew and only three sessions were attended before it had to be completed early due to changes in the personal circumstances of the two remaining women. It should be noted that one of the participants in this group was the woman who recommended the process and who had also participated in the first group. Although only three photographs were submitted from this group, the dialogue and narrative produced was rich and made a highly relevant contribution to the overall project.

Stakeholder interviews

The aim was to attract a range of workers and advocates from across both alcohol and domestic abuse support services that women survivors were likely to come into contact with. Participants were required to have had some experience in either field. Recruitment took place via a combination of advertising through the Scottish Women's Aid network, direct contact with a broad range of NGOs, the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) who facilitated advertising within the Police Scotland network, and informal networks. Despite repeated attempts recruitment proved difficult. Interviewees were geographically dispersed across Scotland so I travelled to their locations to carry out interviews, as interest was limited. A small number of potential candidates expressed an interest in being interviewed but ultimately could not find the time to do so. No potential participants were rejected and the ten that were interviewed represent a broad base of experience across both fields of interest.

Introducing the participants

Across the two groups ten women started but two dropped out. One of the women participated in both groups, which meant that seven individual women were involved throughout the process. All of the participants within the two Photovoice groups had experienced domestic abuse in at least one past relationship and were no longer in an abusive relationship. They were all at different stages of recovery from domestic abuse and the time away from those relationships ranged from eight months to twenty years. The relevance of this is arbitrary, as discussed earlier, evidenced by talk in the groups of ongoing contact through child custody arrangements, ongoing court cases and continued harassment. Three of the women self-identified as having experienced a level of problematic alcohol use during that period of their lives and all but one described their male partners as heavy drinkers or, in one case, an alcoholic. One participant noted that her husband was a non-drinker. Ages ranged from being in their thirties to their sixties and from an ethnicity perspective, all were visibly white. I made a conscious decision not to collect specific demographic data such as employment status or income, as it was not relevant in such a small sample where no attempt was being made to generalise. Any such data cited here was noted as it arose in the group discussions and is specified to provide a general

picture of the women as individual people and not just a set of statistics. Table 2 below introduces the women using their pseudonyms:

Name	About the person
Angela	Angela was in her late fifties and had been separated from her husband for a number of years. Her son is grown up but was a child during the abusive time discussed. She has a cat that her partner used to threaten. She did not talk about her work.
Shona	Shona appeared to be the youngest participant, in her thirties. She has a son, just started secondary school at the time of the group work. He plays competitive football. She had been apart from her partner for a few years as she described just being finished in court after three years. At the time of the study she was not working but had talked of having attending college and did voluntary work for other charities supporting women in recovery. She was also undertaking training to gain qualifications in community work.
Sheila	Sheila was in her forties and had worked in finance with a high level of responsibility but could no longer work due to injuries sustained as part of the abuse. She used to run marathons and play tennis. Her two daughters are now grown up but were young at the time of the abuse. One of them had just got engaged. She has been away from her husband for eight years but still has to deal with texts and calls from him despite legal steps taken to prevent this.
Barbara	Barbara, in her forties, was the most recently separated at the time of the study only six months before. Her love of horses was depicted in her images and had been part of a business partnership shared with her husband. She talked of having had her own business before marrying and prided herself in being an independent strong woman who often did men's jobs. She has a grown up daughter.
Nessa	Nessa, in her forties, used to share a business with her husband. At the time of the study she was celebrating getting her first independent job in

	a supermarket. Her daughter is an adult now and during the study she talked about her son having a part in a school play.
Mary	Mary was sixty and had been apart from her ex husband for a long time and he had subsequently died. She had two sons but one had died. She didn't have a job due to a variety of health problems arising from her abuse and alcohol dependency. She rarely left the house. She loves Fleetwood Mac and is a big Stevie Nicks fan.
Faith	Faith was in her fifties and did not talk much about herself. She lost her photos from her phone before being able to submit them but participated in the wider conversation around others' photos.
Annie	Annie came to the introductory session and featured in a critical early conversation about drinking featured in the findings. Unfortunately Annie was unable to return for later sessions.

Table 2: Introducing the Photovoice participants

A support worker known to the women was always present in the group sessions. In addition signposting to a range of alcohol and domestic abuse agencies was also made available. It was important to provide a 'safe' place for the group sessions. These were held in local venues that were agreed with the support worker as 'safe' and accessible to all. The original plan to use the charity premises for the primary Photovoice group, a safe and familiar place, had to be amended to accommodate a participant who could not manage the stairs due to a physical disability inflicted by her abuser. Travel expenses were offered to all participants. The final two sessions had to be rescheduled to coincide with the service users' weekly meeting held in a local social club bar, to facilitate participants' availability. This meant that other service users were present during our final sessions but were not actively participating. This type of flexibility was a constant requirement to maintain progress in the project.

The principle of informed consent was adhered to by the distribution of a comprehensive information sheet both in advance and at the introductory session

where it was addressed verbally and the consent forms were signed, which included permission for use of the photographs generated by the participants. This aspect of copyright around the use of photographs was revisited at the end of the project. It was made clear to each participant that they had a right to withdraw at any point prior to, or during the research process, with no explanation or obligation to myself and no negative consequences for themselves. No coercion took place and no therapeutic benefit was promised. Copies of the information sheets, and consent forms are available in Appendix D.

Professionals/Stakeholders

A range of professionals working in the fields of alcohol abuse and violence against women across Scotland were interviewed. All were currently employed in the roles described and all were female, although this was not a requirement. Experience ranged from seven to twenty eight years. Table 3 below introduces the participants.

Stakeholder	Role
ST1	Detective Constable within a Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit
ST2	Freelance support worker – domestic violence and homeless services
ST3	Women's Aid Support Worker
ST4	Manager Women's Aid Refuge
ST5	Alcohol Counsellor
ST6	Drug & Alcohol Support Worker
ST7	Women's Aid Support Worker – Substance Abuse Specialist
ST8	Recovery Program Leader – Specialist woman's recovery program
ST9	Advocate and educator in violence against women
ST10	Alcohol Counsellor

Table 3: Introducing the stakeholder participants

Semi-structured interviews were carried out at locations across Scotland that were agreed as convenient and confidential for the interviewees, this ranged across workplaces, university premises and their own homes. Copies of the information sheet and consent form are available in Appendix E.

Data

The data generated from the transcribed interviews and group discussions were anonymised by the use of pseudonyms and codes. Recordings of Photovoice group discussions and interviews were made on a digital audio recorder and files transferred to the university's secure data storage facility and accessible only by me. Electronic copies of photographs were treated in the same way. Physical copies of photographs were held under lock and key. Signed consent forms were held separately from the data.

Analysis

Several levels of data analysis were conducted on the Photovoice data. A first level of analysis was incorporated in the collective group process; photo selection, storytelling and codifying of issues or themes were part of the Photovoice process (Wang and Burris 1999). In the group sessions, women identified the issues and challenges that most concerned them collectively.

These were taken into consideration as part of the later deductive thematic analysis which is argued as offering an accessible and theoretically flexible qualitative analytic method (Boyatzis 1998). Thematic analysis was also considered compatible with the constructionist approach of this research. This multiple - step method allows the researcher to identify and report patterns, or themes, within data. A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response or meaning” (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 224). This involved searching across the whole data set, which included transcriptions of the group sessions, interviews and field notes to find repeated patterns of meaning. It is important to note that this was carried out by myself and did not include any further analysis on the participant generated photographs themselves. This step constituted iterations of close reading and familiarisation with the data, the creation of codes which in turn facilitated theme identification. The

transcripts from the stakeholder interviews were coded and analysed separately and then compared for significant similarities and differences. The codes were intrinsically seen as the building blocks of the analysis used as input to the active process of identifying candidate themes; themes do not emerge but are created by the researcher (Braun and Clarke 2013). Codes were initially created manually then stored and developed further by the use of NVivo10 (QSR 2012) qualitative data analysis software. It was recognised that this was a tool to assist with coding and analysis but the analysis was an interpretive process reliant on what I, as the researcher, identified in the data.

Candidate themes were subsequently refined to a combination of overarching themes. These provided a structure for multiple themes hierarchically. Lateral relationships across themes were also identified during the analysis. The final analysis related the refined themes to the research questions combining them with appropriate extracts and photographs reflected in Chapters Four, Five and Six. It should be noted that extracts from the participants' talk are transcribed and quoted as they spoke, in their local dialect.

Ethics

Safety & autonomy

The sensitive nature of this research in addition to the use of participant generated visual materials made ethical considerations of confidentiality, emotional and physical safety of paramount importance throughout the project. All social researchers are expected to approach their project in an ethical manner. While Queen Margaret University's research protocol and ethical guidelines were used as a basis for this part of the project, there is a growing recognition that research into violence and abuse often raises complex ethical dilemmas that are rarely addressed by standard ethics guidelines. Downes et al. (2014) have highlighted the conflict between biomedical ethical paradigms, often the basis for university committee ethical guidelines, and feminist social justice paradigms committed to empowering marginalised women. In doing so they drew attention to a set of alternative and additional protocols developed during Project Mirabal (Downes et al. 2014) that advocated a positive empowerment approach to abuse research. At the core of this

approach is the belief that abuse survivors are active agents in making decisions about taking part in research and should not be stereotyped as passive victims, where in reality they are often highly skilled at managing risk on a daily basis (Cavanagh 2003). Equally the primary consideration of 'doing no harm' was key to the design as there is an awareness that asking participants to explore previous traumatic experiences may create emotional and psychological reactions. Regular 'checking' in with the participants was carried out at the start of each group session, creating time and a safe space to reflect on the impact of the previous session. The presence of a support worker known to the women and appropriate signposting to other support services provided a further safety framework.

Traditionally decisions made by research ethics boards are based upon an assumption that those in the academy are able to protect participants better than they are able to do themselves (Ponic and Jategaonkar 2012). Such views are criticised for having their roots in a hierarchical and paternalistic positivism that has dominated traditional approaches to research, and pose difficulties for feminist researchers of trauma and abuse (Burgess-Proctor 2015). Eikeland (2006, p.42) refers to this as "condescending ethics" that can result in a form of 'othering' that reinforces participant powerlessness and marginalises them further in the process of knowledge production. For example, insistence on anonymity should not necessarily be assumed, as women who have been chronically silenced may wish to claim their experiences as their own. This transpired to be highly relevant to the current study as a number of the women's decisions around the content of their photographs made them fully identifiable.

An alternative and relational approach to ethics, based on engaged interaction and mutual respect that is more closely aligned with FPAR principles as suggested by Ponic and Jategaonkar (2012), was adopted. This involved a commitment to an ongoing and reflexive dialogue between me, partners and participants in order to ensure that ethical consequences were fully understood by all. This encompassed an 'ethics of care' approach (Wiles et al. 2008) in line with my methodology by developing a close relationships with participants and basing ongoing ethical decisions on the principles of care, compassion and a desire to act in ways that benefitted the people that were the focus of the research. A further critical dimension

of this approach was that all decisions were made through a lens of safety and autonomy: a core value that underpinned this whole project.

Visual ethics

Particular consideration had to be given to the ethical implications of the creation and use of visual materials. Photovoice projects often result in public presentation of the visual work to influence policymakers and increase public awareness and this was a planned outcome of this project in addition to traditional research publication. However, the relative newness of visually oriented research means there is limited agreement on guidelines and practices (Prosser and Loxley 2008). Having reviewed the contemporary literature I drew upon the idea of a situated visual ethics that requires “the adoption of a negotiated, flexible approach to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, situated in the contexts within which the data is produced and that is sensitive to the wishes and beliefs of research participants” (Clark et al. 2010, p. 89). This approach also recognised that ethical decisions emerge throughout the research process, long past research ethics board approval, and require ongoing deliberation and reflection (Guillemin and Gillam 2004).

Issues identified related to consent and the collection and dissemination of visual material and the importance of copyright clearance. UK copyright law favours researchers in that copyright rests with the person taking the image and this also applies to the archiving and reuse of visual data. It is advisable to request that participants assign copyright to the researcher but this should be negotiated within a context of maintaining good collaborative relationships (Wiles et al. 2008). Additional issues exist for photos of people taken by participants. Participants were made aware that they needed to seek permission and explain the purpose prior to taking the photograph. This may raise issues of confidentiality if the person in the picture is identifiable. I did consider whether this concern was enough of a reason to recommend not using people but decided that this went against a key principle of the project to respect the autonomy of the women taking part. This was addressed by discussing in the group setting the implications of putting themselves or others in the photographs and was also revisited at the end of the project. It transpired that a few of the women chose to include family members as well as themselves in the photos. This generated considerable discussion but those that included themselves in a fully

identifiable way were insistent that they were happy to be identified in a context, that it was time that their voice was heard, and they were seen to be speaking out, thereby challenging assumptions of anonymity as an automatic requirement and clearly framing it as a choice.

The overall design, incorporating the above specific considerations, was approved by Queen Margaret University in August 2014. This included an agreement in principle from my collaborative partner Women's Aid East and Midlothian. A copy of the agreement letter can be found in Appendix F.

Designing the plane while flying it: responding to the challenges and uncertainties

As a feminist researcher I recognise the importance of situating myself within the research by being open about my feelings and choices and being reflexive throughout the process. There was also a need for an ongoing reflexive approach re-evaluating progress against the original plan. This required a need to maintain a balancing act between what was desirable and what was practical: between idealism and reality (Silverman 2013).

Participatory action research is like a dance. You must listen to the music to feel the beat and get the rhythm, to sway and move with your partners.
(Maguire 2000 p. xvii)

I did not uncover these wise words until the Photovoice study was complete but I could relate wholeheartedly to the sentiment and reflect upon how, by following the principles of FPAR and my own intuition, I navigated the challenges and uncertainties along the way. As a feminist researcher it was important to be open about my feelings and choices throughout the process. The reflections below are primarily drawn from my field notes and research diary and articulate the volatile nature of this type of research and the challenges faced by a solo, inexperienced researcher, but are also in keeping with the bricolage approach to this research.

The role of the gatekeeper

At times in the Photovoice group sessions I felt the women were deferring to the support worker, or looking to her for guidance while at other times they were

speaking very freely. I had concerns when the support worker would intervene with the 'company line' sometimes, almost to correct them or remind them. This tended to happen when they were reflecting on issues of blame and responsibility. Such tensions, or internal conflicts, were clear in their reflections where they struggled with what they believed in the past and how they understood things now.

The support workers' input also tended to be a more 'informed' commentary, possibly an institutional narrative, all be it a feminist one, on the understanding of domestic abuse and alcohol use, versus a personal one. I was concerned that this may override or influence the women's talk. The workers had been crucial to engaging with and recruiting the participants and I felt their presence was essential from an ethical perspective. It was also clear that the participants would not have attended without them. However, I failed to anticipate that their presence may add another power differential into the room. Here was a further power issue that challenged the egalitarian principles of FPAR. It became clear that both support workers had their own relevant experiences and were survivors too, as is often the case in this field. In many ways they too were balancing multiple roles, as professionals and individual survivors.

During the process I was not concerned enough to intervene or challenge the support workers but I did discuss this with my supervisor. We agreed to continue based on an assessment that the support workers should equally be treated as participants, valuing their contribution. More importantly, I felt that the positive aspects of their presence, offering encouragement and support, outweighed any potential negative influence. On reflection it may have been prudent to have anticipated this and had a clear conversation in advance with each worker on the role they were to play and the potential impact of their presence. It could be argued that they should not have been in the room, or in the room but not at the table. But it is important to realise how difficult it is to build up trust with participants and certainly in the early sessions, the support worker provided that bridge of trust. Feedback on this question from the participants in this study would have provided insight for future research. These concerns over power differentials converged with reflection on my own role in the group process.

The role of the researcher

Pat Maguire (2000, p.xvii) reminds us that attempting PAR requires “listening with your ears, not your mouth”. Also, that there are no shortcuts to listening as a way to honour each person’s story. What is the point of using techniques that celebrate voice if we are not listening? Like any new researcher I was researching the literature and asking others how to do this, how to handle the group discussion in a way that was true to the Freirian principles cited as underpinning the method. I had attended a three day training course in participatory photography research, and while useful, it did not incorporate the Freirian theoretical perspective. I had also carried out a pilot project with a small number of students on a less sensitive topic to experience the process, before embarking upon the primary research. I had been challenged by a supervisor to question what makes this different from a group of people sitting around talking about some photos? Other researchers had used the method at undergraduate level and both said ‘you don’t have to do anything, it just happens’. I was not convinced. It was a struggle to know when to speak, intervene, or stay silent. The Photovoice literature and Freirian literature are not clear how the dialogic process should be handled, or how it actually works out in different projects.

It was a constant battle inside my head not to try to control the process as this seemed at odds with the whole flattening of power structures and considering participants as equal researchers. But equally I had a responsibility in explaining the process and taking charge of it, as I was the expert in the method, wasn’t I? Perhaps this is why there is an argument for PhD students not doing PAR as there is always a personal goal at stake for the student. One early challenge was a feeling of being out of control as the women seemed to want only to talk about the men’s drinking. I had, I thought, made it clear that I wanted them to consider their own drinking experiences and choices. Had I not made that clear? Internal panic ensued. But I had also asked them to bring the issues that mattered most to them? I clearly wasn’t listening.

Further frustration at a lack of control manifested itself as people did not turn up for the planned groups. Session one started with three enthusiastic group members none of whom turned up at session two, although they were to return in session three. Instead, two other women, whom I had never met, turned up ready with

photos and made a rich and valuable contribution. My internal insecurity at not having the anticipated regular group size of six almost blinded me to the comment that one of them made: she probably wouldn't have been able to talk in a larger group so just having the four of us there, including the support worker and myself, really worked for her. I had to remind myself that people have lives and how much I was asking of these women to revisit traumatic times, to take photos, to then talk in front of a group of others including myself, a stranger. I also had to remind myself that there were many aspects that were beyond my control.

Expert or kindred spirit?

In these ongoing internal struggles to be true to feminist principles of minimising power hierarchies between researcher and researched, and to truly see the women as co-researchers, I was particularly preoccupied with how they perceived me. This was at a peak early in the process but did diminish as the group sessions progressed. Was I seen as some kind of expert from the world of academia, a survivor or just another woman? The unusual combination of age, I was fifty nine at the time, and the status of student created a certain amount of curiosity, inviting me to explain how this came to be. But I was hesitant about disclosure of my own experiences of abuse and being married to an alcoholic. On one hand I wanted them to know but I doubted my motivations for this. I was asking them to be open and honest about the most intimate experiences but I was holding back my own. On the other hand, did I just want to be accepted as one of them? Did I want to declare my empathy up front like a badge? I think I really wanted them to see me as more than a detached researcher studying them as a subject. Of course this second construction implies a homogenous view of women with a shared experience which I know not to be true. I decided to follow my instincts and rather than 'announce' my survivor status I allowed it to come out as part of natural conversations, which it did, mainly during informal chats at break time. Subsequently the women never made any reference to my experiences nor did they invite me to share them so perhaps they still saw me as an expert rather than a kindred spirit or maybe they just weren't that interested? If they weren't interested then maybe this reflected a sense that it was their space, their stories, so perhaps I had created what I had set out to do, create a safe space and a sense of ownership.

Gayle Letherby (2003) in her study of miscarriages articulates experiencing a similar dilemma, but also highlights how disclosure allowed her to talk about her own experiences in a way that helped her. This was not the case for me. I tried to remain primarily a facilitator and show empathy and understanding. But ultimately for me, this process was about the women, not about me. In many ways this reflects not only the multiple roles that need to be adopted as an action researcher but the tension between them.

I admit that that being part of the group process caused me to reflect back upon my own experiences in private, some of which began to make more sense in the light of others' stories. It was certainly impossible not to see the participants' stories through the lens of my own life experiences. But Letherby (2003) does remind us that while seeing the world from the participants' perspective is a necessary requirement of feminist research, so is remaining aware of our privileged position in the research relationship, thereby questioning the real possibility of an equal relationship when so much power over data collection, interpretation and presentation remains in the hands of the researcher. Despite the egalitarian aims of feminist and participatory research, ultimately researchers hold the balance of power throughout the research process. This is particularly true in relation to the process of analysis and interpretation of the data. Despite using the Freirian approach, identifying what the women thought were the main issues, a further, detailed level of sociological analysis was required in order to deliver a PhD thesis. In the process of analysing and writing research findings, the researcher has ultimate power over the material and authoritative resources, producing their interpretation in their own voice (Letherby 2003). Each step of the selection of women's voices, carving out narrative evidence to support my arguments, meant the power lay clearly in my hands. It was not practical, nor in keeping with the solo nature of the thesis production, to involve participants in this phase. While I recognised my responsibility to the participants to be true to their testimony, I was aware of the impossibility of fully representing all of their experiences. In this aspect I acknowledge my intellectual privilege, but not superiority, in having access to resources within the academy as well as the stories of the participants. While I remain accountable to the participants to honour their experiences, I also acknowledge the limited power they may have in responding to my ultimate interpretation.

Laughing and crying

PAR involves creating knowledge through participatory processes in the context of human relationships ... it also takes patience, vulnerability, endurance and a willingness to accept others as they are (Maguire 2000, p. xvi).

As a feminist researching alongside women I supported feminist sociologist Ann Oakley's assertion that we should abandon the mythology of hygienic research and embrace the idea of personal involvement as an essential means of connection (Oakley 2005). I worried about them. When people did not turn up for sessions I struggled. The woman in me worried about their welfare but the researcher in me felt frustrated and worried about the project, then I felt guilty about selfishly worrying about the project. It was clear from discussions that despite years of separation most of the women were still forced to deal with contact, mandated or unsolicited, with their abusers. A sharp reminder came in the form of one woman receiving unsolicited texts from an ex-partner during the sessions, which it was explained always started when the latest exclusion order had expired. This tenacity of abusers was to be a recurring aspect of the women's lives. In the group I learned so much about their current and past lives, and so quickly, that it was difficult not to feel connected and invested in them. I learned about a mother's cancer, a son's part in the school play, a son's football talent, a love of horses, music tastes and so much more.

Sometimes, I cried on the drive home. At times I just felt overwhelmed by the cruelty of it all. The myriad of ways that men invent to damage women never ceases to amaze me. At other times it triggered my own memories. I was aware of the risk to the researcher in exploring such subjects. I have been out of that relationship for over twenty years and he has been dead for ten. I was supported by a strong group of friends one of whom is a counsellor; they were my safety net. Unfortunately, I suffered a short episode of depression that coincided with the end of the data collection phase, my first in over nine years. This caused my friends to express concern about the impact the research was having upon me. I worked through this and understand enough about depression to know there is not always a cause or a direct trigger. I used various tools, including mindfulness practice, to move through this phase. At the same time this did reinforce for me the risk that the women

participants faced of re-traumatisation and made me all the more wonderfully appreciative of what they were doing. Sociologist Ann Oakley reminded us recently at a seminar “to never forget the gift that participants give us” (Oakley 2015). But equally, I believe that as researchers we do have to continually critically question the motivation and need for such research, balancing the benefits and risks to all. When I saw the emotional toll on some of the women during the sessions, I sometimes doubted if my work was justified.

During the sessions there were tears, but there was also much laughter and fun. Humour was often used by the women to diffuse tense moments but at other times they were just funny, such as when they rejected my choice of biscuits or when, as part of defining the group contract, they asserted their right to choose when to have a break. Making an important point with humour: “We need to be treated as adults, we’re grown women and don’t need to be told when to pee”. But sometimes the emotions were extreme. I learned to sit with the silences and take my lead from the group.

Reactions beyond the academy

When people hear you are a PhD student they usually enquire as to the research topic. One unexpected personal challenge related to how others, beyond the university or the agencies, reacted upon hearing the answer. It seemed to make many people very uncomfortable. None of us know people’s personal histories and therefore what this topic may mean to them or trigger. Women’s responses tended to fall into two categories, at one end of the spectrum they were often very interested and curious, regularly leading to disclosure of personal or family experiences. At the other end I experienced an immediate defensive response of ‘but what about the men?’. Men’s responses tended to be minimal, often uncomfortable and sometimes framed as a jokey comment around “but what about the men?”. I had learned previously that this critical, defensive position about not taking men’s experiences as victims into account is not unusual in this field. I had one experience where a long conversation with a man, who seemed really sympathetic to having a discussion about it, ultimately adopted a strong victim blaming position of “well sometimes women just deserve it”.

Acts of disclosure, mainly from women, often came at the most unexpected points. What often started as a casual enquiry sometimes put me in a difficult position if I had to leave a place to be somewhere else and a woman wanted to tell me about her experiences. At other times, I just wasn't emotionally ready to handle others' disclosures. I learned to take a phased approach so that I could gauge if people really wanted to know more. By introducing the subject as sociology, then violence against women, then domestic abuse and only if there was an interested party did I offer a more detailed explanation. When the alcohol - domestic abuse combined topic was mentioned a typical response was "oh I know, it's terrible isn't it, what alcohol does to men".

These purely anecdotal observations gave me some reassurance that more research like this was justified not just to effect social change but to engage in conversation about it. Women took up opportunities to tell their stories often in the most random of places and situations, and people's general perception about the role that alcohol had in domestic abuse was as a direct causal link with physical violence. The 'what about the men' question is an interesting one, coming from both men and women. It may reflect an anti-feminist backlash against a perception of an imbalanced focus on women as victims disguised as a position of fairness and equality. 'What about the men?' would be a question better placed in relation to why they are rarely held to account for their behaviour.

I share these experiences in the tradition of the feminist researcher's commitment to reflexivity. I too carry and recognise my biases that inform my standpoint as a researcher and a woman. Such reflections are also in keeping with the bricolage approach taken to this research that recognises the value of multiple perspectives, voices and narratives, including those of the researcher, in the creation of new ways of seeing domestic abuse and alcohol use.

Action & reflection on the FPAR process – the participant experience

Prior to exploring the detailed empirical findings in the next three chapters it is important to address one of the main research questions relating to the methodology; what can FPAR contribute to understanding the intersection of alcohol and domestic abuse and the generation of positive change from a survivor's

perspective? Involving women in the co-creation of knowledge about their own lives was crucial. Doing so in a way that challenged both theory and practice, to bring new ways of understanding to the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol, was a primary aim. Additionally, facilitating that knowledge creation through a collaborative partnership, using an approach that viewed women as experts in their own lives and enabled their voices individually and collectively was fundamental to the study.

In attempting to answer this question, this section will draw primarily upon the experiences of participation in the Photovoice aspect of the current study. Voluntary anonymous feedback was collected from participants through a brief questionnaire supplied to the original Photovoice group. An example can be found in Appendix G. Only two forms were returned, possibly due to only four participants remaining with the service at this point. Further feedback was obtained in conversation with one participant who had left the first group temporarily. I also draw upon an interview with the support worker from the collaborative partner organisation who had attended the Photovoice sessions. These sources were supplemented by my observations and field notes.

In assessing this research it is important to pay attention to the congruence between the qualities of participation that were claimed and the actual work achieved. An indication of quality is that the participants get enthused and empowered by being involved, developing new insights and understandings through a growing critical consciousness (Reason and Bradbury 2006). Identifying what constitutes the action in action research has been highlighted by other researchers as problematic (Reid et al. 2006) as the term is often used interchangeably with the idea of social change. It is therefore important to ensure the broader, and more elusive, goals of structural change do not render invisible the local or personal actions achieved. In a project of this limited size and resources it was important to consider action at both an individual and collective level.

Voice

Methodologically the metaphor of 'voice' is common to both feminist and action research, sharing the idea that to listen to people is to empower them (Maguire 2000). It was clear from the outset of the study that the concept of voice or 'having a

voice' was extremely important to the women participants. This was a core motivation used by myself and the support worker in the recruitment process and was reinforced at the first session. The process the women were embarking upon was presented by the support worker as an opportunity to 'put your stance on things, to have a voice' As stories of coercion and control emerged through the group sessions, it became clear that the women welcomed the opportunity to express their views, having been silenced within their intimate relationship and sometimes wider social settings. Silencing was often expressed in relation to not being allowed to have a voice or to express an opinion for fear of retribution. This was regularly articulated in terms of expressions such as "*it always had to be his way or the high way*" and "*I felt worthless and just felt....empty...and I had nae voice*" or "*that was me I had to watch what I said or no' speak at all*". Beyond the intimate relationship 'silencing' consisted of a reluctance to speak out for fear of being judged or not being believed. A powerful representation of this notion was captured in this image created by a participant:



Photo 1: Silenced

I could not have an opinion of my own. Always had to watch what I said. When I did speak I had to make sure it was what he wanted to hear.

The idea of 'giving voice' challenged me as a feminist researcher as it implied a power differential that the research was attempting to shift, if not negate. Maguire (2000) has pointed out that we do not have the power to give voice but what we can do is break down the barriers for both speakers and listeners.

My own observations and participant feedback indicate that the Photovoice group sessions successfully opened up a space for women to talk about aspects of their experiences relating to alcohol and domestic abuse, that they may not have otherwise shared. There were indeed several incidents of disclosure where the individual women pointed out that they had not previously shared these aspects of their experiences with anyone else. While these were always responded to sensitively, and sometimes appeared to be cathartic for the individual, they also generated strong emotions.

My intention and hope had always been to empower women through the process of Photovoice itself. Throughout this process there were multiple opportunities for decision making and autonomy. They each had the power to effectively direct our gaze toward images and text that reflected their world from their own standpoints (Harding 1987; Frohmann 2005). The act of deciding what to include or exclude as the subjects of the photographs, and ultimately what photos and text to include in the study, were also important decision points for the participants.

After an initial concern about 'doing it right', each woman went on to take their own unique approach to producing the photographs with, what appeared to be, relative confidence, which was then enhanced by a supportive group reaction to each other's images. It is not within the remit of the method for the researcher to analyse the images, as the meanings attached were provided by the women. It is, however, useful to consider the autonomy and individuality reflected in the different approaches chosen. Some used visual metaphors to express deep emotions (e.g. knotted rope, graveyard, dark and light). The use of visual metaphors represented a level of critical thinking in the process of capturing the meaning of their experiences (Lorenz 2010). Another adopted a story telling approach to capture the shifts and changes in personhood she had experienced over time before, during, and after the abusive relationship, with the start and end photos representing a happy version of herself. In many ways, this overlapped with another's focus on recovery and looking forward to the future. Some were staged by the participants and mainly taken in their own homes. It was crucially highlighted by Angela that this new home was now a safe place and not the site of the events she was capturing, again indicating that narrative of change and recovery.

However, what became a significant part of the images as a collection was the decision by three of the women to place themselves, in a recognisable way, within their own photographs. The risks of doing so in relation to publications and public dissemination of the research had been discussed at the start of the project and were revisited at multiple points. Yet this became an important aspect of involvement for those women who felt it was time that they were not only heard, but also seen to be speaking out. Combined with the power to define what was significant within their stories, each of these can be considered important acts of autonomy within the research experience. For example, one woman withdrew her original set of photographs after talking around them in the group, as she felt they were just too emotional. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the women felt both empowered and safe enough to express themselves, yet ultimately felt they were in control of the research content.

A safe space

Despite such emotional challenges, providing safe spaces for individual and collective reflection appeared to make participation a positive and potentially therapeutic experience for some:

Shona: every time I come to do a Photovoice session I come away having talked about things I hadn't said before. Sometimes I feel wrecked after, other times I feel great but either way I feel that I have dealt with something.

The project made no claims to any therapeutic benefit at the outset but for Shona it appeared to help her to open up about different aspects of her experiences. Shona had also talked individually to me about how she regularly took photos before this project, but did not know why. The process of participating in the Photovoice project in itself assisted her in developing a skill in reflecting upon and analysing her photography on an ongoing basis. Her enthusiasm for the process is discussed in detail later in this chapter. Another participant indicated a similar positive experience:

I found it almost therapeutic looking and discussing the photos (anon feedback)

The WAEML support worker who attended the sessions gives her view:

ST7: I thought it was really, really good....I thought that the women found it really therapeutic...I think it gave them a talking point and I think even within the group of women that took part I think it gave them a safe place to disclose their experiences, where it wasn't in a support session..... and again it's to take away that embarrassment. So when somebody says "oh that's nothing...this is what I done"I think it really helped them and I think it helped them put things into perspective that it wisnae just me...it can happen to anybody.

ST7: I think with that group, the women are so different and they come from all different walks of life, it was quite powerful for them to see "oh it's no' just me"

While no two women ever experience domestic abuse in the same way, the results of the study highlighted a common sense of isolation felt by the women. It is therefore unsurprising that benefits can come from finding commonality through shared experiences. In this study in particular, responses to situations that women may have been reluctant to disclose previously appeared to enhance that feeling of "I am not the only one".

However, not all feedback from the sharing aspect of participation was positive. One participant, Shona, proved to be a particularly significant contributor to this project. I think it is useful here to tell Shona's story through a vignette rather than fragment it across this chapter:

Photovoice in action: an individual's story

Shona was an enthusiastic participant in the first Photovoice group, attending the multiple sessions, talking openly through her photos and responding supportively and positively to others. At a fundraising event she had also enthusiastically introduced me to another support worker from a community charity who was interested in starting a Photovoice group. This idea was inspired by the positive reports she had heard from Shona. Then Shona stopped coming to the group. It appeared she had stopped attending the Women's Aid service and was not expected back. It was not appropriate for me to push for more information, although as mentioned before, I often worried about the welfare of the participants.

Some weeks later I accidentally met her in a local library. Being unsure of her response, I let her lead the way. She approached me in a friendly way and wanted to talk about the group and asked if I would wait and talk to her. Over a coffee she gave me feedback on her Photovoice experience. She said that she didn't think the Photovoice process had worked as well as it might.

"I didn't feel I could open up in that group as other women didn't seem to understand or accept addiction". In the group sessions I had detected a tension when she repeatedly drew upon addiction narratives regarding her husband's drinking and others didn't. At one point briefly and quietly she had also referred to being at NA (assumed to mean narcotics anonymous). She had only offered minimal commentary around this part of her experience: "I was never dependent but was into cannabis", "everyone uses something to cope". She further added that this lack of common understanding of addiction in the group had made her hold back.

She also felt that other women may not have been open and honest about their drinking and that she had "felt more comfortable in group sessions at another project". I knew this to be a program that dealt with substance use issues as a focus but incorporated other traumas that women may have suffered, such as domestic abuse.

Her experiences highlighted a dilemma I had struggled with since the conception of the project. I had deliberately tried to avoid focusing only on women's alcohol use as problematic. In doing so I was bringing together a mix of women who presented

themselves across a spectrum of levels of alcohol use. The concern had always been whether women who identified their drinking as problematic would feel able to talk openly with others who did not. It would appear that I was right to be concerned. While this experience may highlight a shortcoming or challenge in the design it also supports evidence of a fear of judgement felt by others, a major theme emerging from the overall study, who don't share the similar experiences and understandings.

Why this is important to a reflective evaluation is that Shona went on to participate in the second smaller Photovoice group eventually organised with the second NGO. In that group, two participants remained after session one: Shona and Mary, a woman who self identified as a long term recovering alcoholic. In the remaining two sessions I facilitated a rich and diverse dialogue where Shona was able to open up freely and differently in the company of a survivor with whom she appeared to find more common understandings.

Furthermore, this story continues to detail an important action element of the project. During this period Shona continued to advocate for the benefits of Photovoice. As part of her ongoing recovery journey, she also attended another service and as part of that was studying for a community development qualification. She asked if I would meet with her and a worker from that project to discuss further uses of Photovoice. At this meeting Shona shared how participation in the Photovoice sessions had allowed her to develop a deeper understanding of her own use of photographs which she told me she used to take randomly but never knew why. She wanted other women to share and benefit from the Photovoice experience.

Shona: it now makes sense of why I kept taking photos of trees (prior to the project). I think it relates to the kitchen table made of wood as it was once a tree representing strength and growth

It transpired Shona wanted to run a woman's group using Photovoice for her assessment project and the support worker also had an idea to use it with a community group she worked with. I agreed to be a supporter and advisor to assist them along the way.

Sadly these projects were not to come to fruition and I was later to learn that Shona had stopped attending all of the services since her ex-partner had come out of jail.

He had started turning up at all of the groups that she attended and disrupting her life at every turn. It would seem that 'search and destroy missions' directed at women's autonomy see no boundaries. Ironically a recurring theme across Shona's story had been the tenacious nature of such men: how they don't give up, because in their eyes you belong to them.

End of vignette

Individual action

Transformation within action research is a process and not a one-time event. Therefore participation as a form of action needs to be considered on two levels: specific acts arising from the project and the ongoing process of change and growth at an individual level (Maguire 2000). From an action research point of view, Shona's participation in Photovoice represented both an opportunity and a tool for personal growth and education. Others researching domestic abuse have pointed out the importance of 'a process' involved in the building of new lives and new selves after leaving an abusive relationship (Maguire 2000; Allen 2012). All of the women participants were clearly in different stages of establishing or consolidating new lives, therefore any individual action arising from the project needs to be considered in the context of actions that were underway prior to participation in this project. Through their talk, all of the women were evidently engaged in ongoing struggles negotiating and challenging systems of power such as the criminal justice system, housing, child custody, as well as securing employment and caring for their children.

Simultaneously, they continued to try to make sense of their experiences. Most of them had talked informally and positively of having taken part in the Freedom Programme (Freedom Programme 2016) offered through the local Women's Aid service. This nationally available program providing information, not therapy, is aimed at helping women make sense of what has happened to them, and is based upon the previous work of Craven (2008) with male perpetrators of domestic abuse. Participation in the Photovoice group sessions appeared to provide a further step in building up a better understanding of their experiences, through sharing and dialogue, relating to the wider social issues that impacted their lives, both then and now. Similar to how the women had actively worked to manage their experiences

during the abusive relationships, they now appeared to be actively managing developing their understandings on an ongoing basis. In this context, the evidence suggests that participation in the Photovoice sessions provided both a space for reflection and therefore a further step in the journey of recovery. In the spirit of positive thought I share a photo from Shona's contribution below that reflects resilience and a sense of hope that pervaded the women's attitudes:



Photo 2: A glimmer of light

Something that keeps you going towards the end.

Additionally, based on individual feedback there appeared to be a consensus that it had been a positive experience to the extent that a number of participants indicated they would recommend it to others or take part in a further study.

I want other women to benefit from this. (Anon)

I feel that other women (and men) can benefit from a Photovoice process
(Anon)

Overall I enjoyed the experience so much so I would contribute to a similar project in the future (Anon)

It is important to note that not all of the women had attended the Women's Aid service or the Freedom Programme for specialist support. One woman in the second Photovoice group described continuing to live in extreme isolation many years after separation from her ex-partner; she rarely left the house and was in long-term recovery from alcoholism. For these reasons her neighbourhood charity worker, who visited her at home, had invested months of gentle encouragement to persuade her come along and take part in the project. Mary had been creative in the past and it was hoped that participation might be an opportunity to revive that aspect of her personhood. Because that group had to be abandoned it was not possible to obtain direct feedback on her experiences. However, I had supplied these two participants with digital cameras which were to be donated to the partner neighbourhood charity on completion of the study. A later update from the support worker informed me she had left the camera with Mary, who had continued to use it to venture out and about, taking photographs that they then discussed. In many ways this minor act of freedom epitomised a small step, but an important victory in overcoming the ongoing isolation that this one woman had experienced as a result of the dual experience of domestic abuse and resulting alcohol problems.

One of the goals of action research and this project in particular was the development of the critical consciousness of both participants and researcher Maguire (2000). Critical consciousness involves developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action (Freire 1996). In the group dialogue women began to examine the contradictions inherent in societal attitudes towards women and alcohol. This was something they showed awareness of, but they began to interrogate in more detail the persistence of such attitudes in what they perceived should be a more egalitarian society. Of equal importance was their reflection upon how they used to understand the role of alcohol in the domestic abuse context and how they have grown to understand it now. One woman also commented on the outcome for her; that she was able to see "*that my life is a lot happier now*" (anon).

Furthermore, the group had challenged the inequity in holding women responsible for men's abusive behaviour, especially when such attitudes were reflected by professionals and people in positions of power. This enabled them to identify and articulate what changes they would collectively like to see.

Collective action: "We should be allowed to shoot the bastards"

The very act of coming together as a group of women who felt stigmatised in itself challenged public notions of abused women as passive victims, as alcoholics, as unfit mothers, not worthy of attention. However, as empowering as participation seemed to have been, when I posed the question in the final session "What would you like to see changed?" an immediate individual response articulated slowly and seriously appeared to be one of feeling powerless:

*Faith: It doesn't matter what we think, we aren't going to change anything.
Nothing is going to change!*

Yet the group quickly came up with practical, and sometimes radical, suggestions such as "*we should be allowed to shoot the bastards*". While this idea elicited much hilarity and support, it also reflected a deep disappointment in the ability of the current judicial system to tackle the issue of domestic abuse; a topic of concern to most of the women who felt very let down by the criminal justice system. Ultimately, the women called for large scale changes in society around education on domestic abuse from school age, training for anyone working with abused women, societal attitudes to women and alcohol in general and a campaign to look at the bigger picture of alcohol and domestic abuse. These calls to action were captured initially on two posters that accompanied the initial photographic exhibition of their work. The aim of creating an exhibition had been agreed since the onset of the project as a specific participatory goal agreed by all and appeared to have been of crucial appeal. While the women embraced the idea that their photographs might contribute on some level to raising awareness of the issues surrounding domestic abuse and alcohol use, they appeared sceptical that it would have any impact with regards to major social change. They were probably correct, but this should not allow us to undervalue the achievements of this collaborative enterprise.

What was crucial was the process of collating the knowledge generated on the subject through their photographs and texts, and taking that opportunity to have the women's voices heard. At the final group session each participant was given a printed copy of their transcript that reflected how they had talked through their photographs. The primary aim of this was for them to each decide a title and caption for each photograph that they were happy to include in the exhibition. But this also gave them a chance to reflect upon their stories and a space to change their mind if that was the case. Reactions to the transcripts varied from a reflection on how much they had said, to good humoured surprise at how Scottish they sounded "dae I really talk like that?". Some were more confident than others in making the caption and title decisions, so myself, and the support worker assisted those that were less certain.

This was a critical point for everyone. There was a major event being held locally to launch considerable new funding for the SMILE project that would provide improved services across a number of service providers in the area:

The Support to Maintain Independent Living Effectively (SMILE) Project is the result of a successful joint application between WAEML, Police Scotland, East and Midlothian Councils to the Big Lottery Fund. £500,000 was awarded in total and the project aims to build on the successful implementation of local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences and a Domestic Abuse Advisor post in Mid and East Lothian. WAEML as part of the project, hosts two posts – a substance misuse project worker and routes to independence worker. Additionally WAEML is developing and delivering a shared early response service to women over the weekend. (WAEML 2015, p.3)

This included a new post within my partner organisation for a specialist substance abuse worker. The launch event was to be held at a prominent local venue and attended by politicians, representatives from police, local government and other statutory agencies. At short notice, we had an opportunity to exhibit our work at this event. Here was a chance for their voices to be heard and their efforts to be viewed. At my request the women, collectively and independently from me, chose a title for the exhibit: "Same Hell, Different Devils". This captured the sense of entrapment, lack of control and inevitability they had felt; whatever they did they ended up in hell, whether through domestic abuse, alcohol or both, the different devils being the

abusers or alcohol. The women had chosen this outwith our group session showing a real sense of autonomy and ownership. At this stage the photographs had only been printed on paper and the captions hand written. I subsequently had them mounted for display and two accompanying posters designed and printed. Due to short timescales and the women's availability it was not possible to include their input on the poster design but they did choose between two options that I produced.

Despite the tight timescales, it was agreed that this was not an opportunity to be missed. The day of the event was the first chance they had to view their work in its final form. It was clear when we met that day that they were really proud of their work, seeing it on display with others taking an interest in viewing it provoked feelings of pride, with one woman articulating this as being the best part of the project.

I felt very proud and emotional (Anon)

For me being able to see the whole display and how all the pictures worked together with the sentences underneath was brilliant to look at and also very effective visually and mentally (Anon)

This was reiterated in the reflections of the key support worker:

ST7: I think when they seen it exhibited, they were so proud, they were really, really chuffed....cos it was really powerful!

While another reflected upon the value of such work in informing others:

Also thought it was good for people to see domestic abuse survivors' views and in their own words, how alcohol affected them (Anon)

While I was incredibly proud of their work it became clear that they considered it ultimately my project as they congratulated me on the exhibition, despite my protests that it was our work, a collaboration. I wondered if I had failed to engender that sense of joint ownership. Despite such concerns, the significance of what had been achieved was reinforced as I observed people's reactions and comments as they viewed the exhibit. The women's views, images and voices were out there, in the public domain and were creating a reaction.

For the two participants in the second Photovoice group it was not possible to progress to an exhibition with their involvement, although their photographic contribution has been incorporated in conference and teaching dissemination. The members of this group appeared to benefit more on an individual level in liberating their creative potential and in confidence building. Yet even on this level, the flexibility of the Photovoice group process has the potential for a positive impact.

Taking a bricolage approach and being responsive to the situation led me to using photo-elicitation with Barbara as she came late to the project. Comparing this to the group approach, there appeared to be some advantages and disadvantages. From a researcher perspective this was more interactive and more aligned with a semi-structured interview, but the photos were used to lead the story. In this situation I responded with more questions as there were only the two of us in the room, so in some ways it created a richer individual narrative. However, it also meant Barbara missed a potential opportunity to gain from the group sharing experience. Both approaches have much to offer and in some ways one- to-one elicitation may make recruitment easier in future research. Yet I believe that, for women who are willing and able to participate, the group aspect, combined with the photographic element presents positive opportunities for personal growth and empowerment.

Having reflected upon the overall design and the experience of conducting and participating in the research I will now turn to the findings arising from the analysis. These are presented in the following three chapters, each in turn covering the three overarching themes identified in the analysis: These are represented in Figure 1 below:

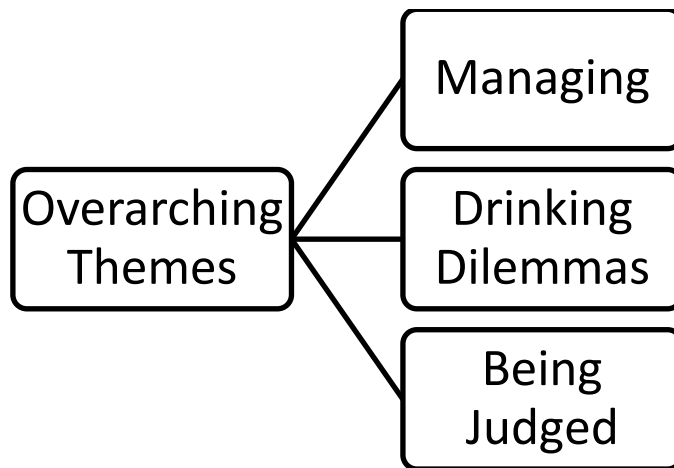


Figure 1: Overarching Themes Map

Each chapter explores and develops the related underlying themes in detail. As the purpose and format of the Photovoice process is based upon Paulo Freire's (1996) concept of dialogue it is critical to include extracts that demonstrate not only individual quotations but also the interaction between participants. Extracts from the stakeholder interviews are also interwoven where relevant.

Chapter Four

Managing domestic abuse

“Women who hurt in our societies often remain invisible (Ettorre 1994, p.83)”

Managing

This first of the three overarching themes, managing, focuses on how women experienced and responded to men’s drinking and behaviour contextualised within a wider framework of abuse. The concept of ‘managing’ on the part of the women is utilised in the active sense to recognise the multi-faceted efforts and skills required by them in response to the abusive context of their daily lives. Three themes were identified within this category of managing and are represented in Figure 2 below:

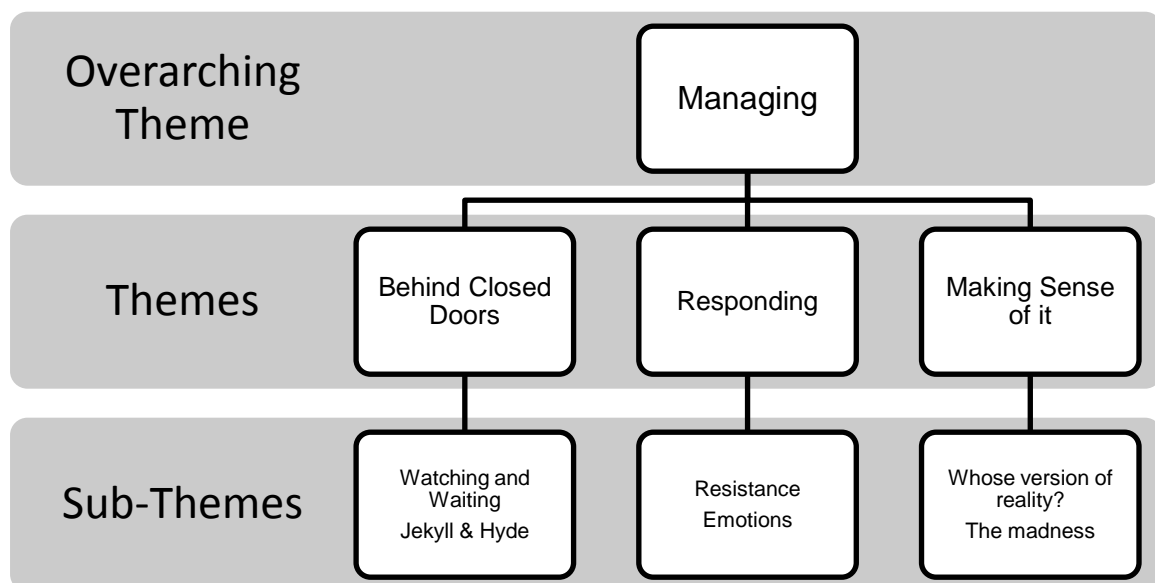


Figure 2: Theme map ‘Managing’

The first of these themes, ‘behind closed doors’, explores the importance of the division between private and public aspects of their daily lives. The strategies developed to manage these daily lives are subsequently examined through the

theme of 'responding'. Finally the third theme highlights the challenges the women faced in 'making sense of it'.

A basic argument of this thesis is that we must understand the very particular context that abused women are living under in order to appreciate the role of alcohol in their lives. This requires us to examine how drinking practices and beliefs are embedded and enacted in their everyday lives, but crucially, what those everyday lives look like. Furthermore it is key to explore how these interconnect with other gendered practices and beliefs. This chapter sets out to articulate the details of the women's living conditions that will underpin the ongoing analysis for later chapters. Through the photographs and narratives all of the women painted a picture of living under conditions of violence, intimidation, isolation and control: what Stark (2007) identifies as key categories of the 'technology' of coercive control. He argues that this strategy is developed through trial and error to dominate a specific woman but has a common pattern to it. In any individual relationship any one feature may dominate and the way in which they are combined will differ, but the overall intent marks out a deliberate strategy. It has been important in the analysis to stay attuned to these features and they are highlighted as they are interwoven through the testimony used in these findings chapters. Equally, it has been essential to distinguish between Johnson's (2008) types of partner violence, where coercive control is the key to such understandings.

Although the participants were invited to talk about the role that alcohol played for them in relation to their own alcohol use, all but one of them initially focused on the impact of their male partner's drinking and associated behaviour as part of a wider pattern of abuse. The exception to this was one woman whose husband was a cannabis user rather than a drinker. This division between their own drinking and the men's drinking generated distinct, but interrelated, themes during the analysis.

Behind Closed Doors - "never in public, it was always me and him and a shut door"

The most dominant theme that emerged through the group sessions and in particular, generated by the photographs, was the concept of 'behind closed doors'. At a macro level this idea perpetuates and reinforces the hidden and selective nature

of domestic abuse in the public eye as a private problem. At a micro, individual level, it captures the way that the women experienced it. It highlights how regardless of a growing recognition of domestic abuse as a public issue the actual experience of it was described by the women as very private and intimate, epitomised by its hidden nature and the isolating experience of managing it alone.

Watching and waiting

These aspects were reflected in common experiences of always watching and waiting behind those closed doors of the home. But these extended beyond describing individual incidents of watching and waiting to an ongoing way of being in the world.



Photo 3: Watching & listening

Angela: Just behind the front door because I used to be sitting watching. Sometimes he'd come in and be in a good mood but you just never knew what, so you'd be watching and listening. Sometimes I'd be in my bed and he'd get me up. Start talking drunk, then he would just turn ...

The symbolism of the door was dominant, particularly taken from the inside of the home, as Angela described the act of watching and waiting for his return. This narrative captured the unpredictability of the man's behaviour, the never knowing what to expect. The associated anxiety and fear appeared to be enhanced when he was out drinking. But the idea that she was 'always watching' indicated a broader experience; a necessary way of being in the world in response to abuse having been established. The language Angela uses of 'watching and listening' may also imply a passivity that belies the agency involved in being prepared to respond to whatever transpires.

What is also highlighted here is the enduring nature of that fear and tension long after leaving the abusive situation. The fear and vigilance induced by the abusive experience was something that many of the women described as persisting for years after separation:

Angela: Aye, I was always watching, it's strange, it took me a while to get used to no' being scared, no' watching the door.....

This photograph and extract resonated strongly within the group generating powerful reactions. The symbolism of the door was taken up by others to offer multiple and different meanings. For Mary this represented the private, intimate and hidden nature of domestic abuse.

Mary: ...never in public, it was always me and him and a shut door...

This selective and private location of the home for the enactment of abuse is often cited as evidence of the deliberate and controlled nature of abusive men's behaviour, thereby contesting any notions of men out of control due to alcohol use. Equally, it has been used to reinforce the perception of the problem of domestic abuse as being a private matter and not a public problem which has been problematised by feminists for a number of decades. In the narratives there was no indication of men losing control in public or being physically violent to others. All of the women were aware that they tended to be the sole targets of physical abuse, although threats to pets and family were reported but never carried out.

Additionally for Shona, the door particularly represented feelings relating to the

experience of entrapment common to coercive control, and experienced by the majority of the women.

Shona: We can all relate to that front door, feeling imprisoned and trapped

The home is commonly thought of as a place of safety and refuge, somewhere to retreat to, but for women experiencing domestic abuse it can be a prison both physically and psychologically (Williamson 2010). This is captured and reinforced in the photograph and participant's caption below:



Photo 4 : Beaten, Isolated, Trapped, Fear

For all of the women, violent behaviour was clearly understood by them as part a range of tactics to exercise power and control. Once violence was established as a means of control, the threat of violence was always there to retain a state of fear that created the conditions for entrapment. The women spoke about this in terms of a need to be hyper-vigilant, living on their nerves, walking on egg-shells and running on adrenalin. Always having to be 'on', combined with the unpredictability of the abuser's behaviour, creates a damaging condition of chronic fear and trauma as described in the work of Pain (2012). Judith Herman's (1992) classic work on trauma draws parallels with the experiences of survivors of concentration camps where escape is difficult combined with a perpetrator who presents as 'normal'. Such fear was not only experienced around individual incidents but was ongoing and

cumulative and still resonated with the women years later:

Mary: the door one and the clock one just kept boofin' (shouting) at me boofin' at me...and Mary that was your past. Waiting on him coming in...and looking at that doorthat was a big, big part.

Shona: Keys turning in that lock eh!

Mary: Stomach like....euuugh

Shona: Aye knots...

The resulting harmful levels of anxiety are captured in the dialogue and by Shona in Photo 3 below, as she described the real visceral tension experienced by all of the women.



Photo 5: Knots

Shona: This one....the thing with this one was knots, fae the feeling of anxiety in your stomach being in knots like, prior to them coming in ...and ken, just that whole feelin'...

This need to be hypervigilant appeared to be intensified when their partners had been out drinking where the behaviour was potentially more volatile and unpredictable. All of the women with heavy drinking partners described experiencing a range of demands on their partners' return from being out drinking. These regularly focused around food, sex and generally being available to him regardless of the time of night, demonstrating a sense of entitlement over women's bodies and labour. Yet, equally the women acknowledged that such demands were part of a regular pattern of behaviour, not only related to his drinking. Under whatever circumstances, the women's views regularly reflected an expectation of it being their duty, regardless of their own wishes.

What is significant here is the gendered nature of these demands, always testing and challenging women's compliance and competency as wives and partners. This demonstration of power within the gender regime of the abusive household (Morris 2009) can be understood as men trying to enforce emphasised femininity on their partners; a form of femininity focused on the man's needs and requirements (Connell 2009).

The emphasis on the provision of meals was common, and again unpredictable, with women always trying to anticipate men's demands while at the same time never succeeding due to the volatile nature of the rules. Such repeated 'failures' appeared to drive women to attempt to be perfect. Accounts of never being able to do the right thing were dominant throughout all of the discussions:

Shona: ...or if the tea wisnae ready...it got worse, if the tea wisnae on the table...I mind once, I hadnae seen him for 3 days and he came in with this mate and he's like..... and even if he didnae come hame I still made sure that tea was on that table ...

Angela: I know...I've got a photo there of the microwave and that's because he'd say, dinnae make me anything if he was going to the pub ...but if he came in he would look in the microwave for it and I'd say 'but you didnae want anything' and he'd.....(voice tails off).

So I'd make it, but he'd always come in look in the fridge and microwave, I could never do the right thing.

Angela: anything to just get you up eh?

Shona describes in the extract below how in one case food even took on a symbolic quality where she had learned from experience that a request for a certain type of meal indicated trouble. To anyone else, her concern for her safety, because he asked for steak, would have made her look like the 'crazy person'. Yet, she does everything else to try to keep him happy: "...he came in, his bath was run, his tea was on the table..." This hidden, coded nature of warnings is not unusual in the tactics of coercive control (Stark 2007). It reinforces the intimate, private, intentional nature of the abuse, and is effective in creating fear and anxiety in anticipation of the outcome:

Shona:he had wanted steak for his tea and every time I made steak it was a mistake, there was disaster..... I knew when I had to make steak there was going to be hell...so he had wanted steak and he had just been paid so it must have been the Friday....

Despite their experiences, women reported attempts to achieve perfection in response to demands around household duties no matter how unreasonable they seemed:

Shona: We had laminate and one day I'd mopped across the way instead of goin' wi' the grain of the wood and it caused this big...mental...breakdown. He expected me to move the couch every day and like Hoover and mop underneath it...who in their right mind does that, yeah once a week, but every day? And the bed, I couldnae lift the bed on my own.

Women clearly recognised the arbitrary nature of the rules as evidenced by the language of 'who in their right mind'. Nonetheless, the micro-management of these everyday tasks put women under severe pressure to conform against their better instincts or suffer the consequences: further abuse and the risk of being held responsible for it.

Shona:...and it was always "if you never said that ...this widnae have happened"just like...silly things....and that strived to make us be perfect. I was so hypersensitive, like everything had to be like perfect and all very

scheduled and on-time....and just that anxiety and that freaking out when that time came...even after like I started to break way from it...I was still very cautious of having to be in the house or back for that time.

Two women in particular shared their experiences of rape within marriage although it was not expressed in those terms. Both talked of a sense of duty as wives; one that conflicted with their own wishes and the resulting experience of never feeling clean.

Shona: Aye, and he would just take it...I mind waking up in the middle of the night wi' him on top of me....and the next morning him saying "awe I cannae remember" but when you're in yer bed sleeping' and you wake up with this six foot 5 , eighteen stone man actually on top of you ...it takes you a minute to come to....and like many a night I felt disoriented andso I'm still like pretty much the same....I dinnae feel clean...even like just go to the toilet and things like that . But wi' him...(gets upset).

A real sense of violation is captured here. Such acts demonstrate men's sense of entitlement and ownership over their wives and partners that has its roots in patriarchy. Rape has been defined as a conscious process of intimidation and a method of control that enforces the subordination of women through terror (Brownmiller 1975). Work on trauma has also recognised it as having the purpose of demonstrating contempt for a woman's autonomy and dignity, with an essential element being to dominate, humiliate and terrorise (Herman 1992). It can therefore be seen how sexual assault is part of the broader pattern of entrapment and domination that it punctuates.

The way that men's micro regulation commonly focused on domestic activities traditionally related to women's roles in a relationship, such as child-care, housework, cooking and feminine appearance, highlights the continued importance of traditional gender roles, even in what is deemed to be a more egalitarian society. However, this immediate focus of micromanagement is less important than what Stark (2007) highlights as a way to ensure her obedience in a feminine way that is in line with his view of masculinity.

Clock-watching was a regular experience described by most of the women in many aspects of the abusive relationships. For some, the micro regulation of common

tasks such as shopping, school runs and social outings, involved men monitoring their partners under a strict time regime. *"I was the mad woman that used to run around Sainsbury's every day cos I only got 15 minutes to do the shopping"* (Nessa). Not being home on time carried serious consequences; *"being locked in the house all the next day"* (Mary) or *"a kicking by him wearing a pair of doc marten boots"* (Mary).

Mary further describes the consequences of violating the rules and regulations:

Mary:...he always filled the bath with water and he'd keep my head in it...he would hold meone night I was out, and he broke my noseWhat I wanted to take was like a photo of a clock because I got told to be in at 11.00 ...

For others the clock watching related more to awaiting his return.



Sheila: Ticking of the clock was counting down the time he was due home. I used to pretend I was sound asleep by 12.05 am Sunday night/Monday morning as he'd be coming in drunk.

Hopefully he will leave me alone tonight.

Photo 6: Clockwatching

Sheila: Ye know ...yeah you'd hear the doorjust clockwatching all the time....especially on a Saturday. I've never followed football but I used to see what his team had done on a Saturday because if his team had lost, I knew if he was coming home I would definitely be getting hit.

Here, Sheila connects the anticipation of abuse directly to a pattern of behaviour established by her husband, relating to his external socialising activities that sometimes included drinking after watching football. Connecting his subsequent abusive behaviour to his response to the success or failure of his football team reflects a common and powerful discourse in Scotland, one that inter-connects football and domestic violence, often through excessive alcohol use, despite a limited body of evidence (Crowley et al. 2014). Equally she may be attempting to excuse his behaviour by blaming it on events beyond his control. Such discourses

are also available to men but it was not clear whether he had ever made that connection to excuse himself. A previous belief in a direct causal relationship between alcohol and the physical violence was established in the minds of some of the women as they reflected on their past experiences, but these were equally challenged by themselves at later points in the group discussions, and are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Jekyll & Hyde

The private and public dichotomy related to domestic abuse is reflected not only in the selective location of the home. Women also described how they had to deal with the contrasting personas constructed by their partners. Originating in Robert Louis Stevenson's fictional novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson 2003) the character of the respected Dr. Jekyll occasionally transforms into the vile Mr. Hyde. This metaphor for the transformation of a man from good to bad has been used elsewhere by women who have experienced domestic abuse (Enander 2011) and specifically related to alcohol use (Galvani 2010b). In the current study it was predominantly used by the women to differentiate between the public and private personas of their male partner. The exception was Shona who described the unpredictability of the individual person that she experienced on a daily basis. Being presented with multiple characters destabilised her ability to predict, and therefore respond, to his behaviour:

Shona: I used to say wi' him it was like livin' wi' me,masel (myself) and Irene...because you didnae ken if you were getting ye just didnae ken what was comin' and it'd be like boom, boom, boom...

For others the issue was the credible way he presented publicly compared to the reality of the abusive person they experienced at home. These extracts demonstrate how persuasive the public persona of the men could be.

Shona: People seem to like him, he's life and soul...

Angela : People used to say I don't know how you put up wi' him being so happy and laughing and joking all the time, that would get on my nerves.

...and once I says "he's no like that all the time, he's no like that at hame " and he just looked at me.

It was as soon as the door shut, as soon as my front door shut he changed like that!

Sheila: People would say he's such a wonderful man, he's this and that...people would ask "how's B?" when we first split upthey'd say "I can't believe you split up"

The front of credibility created a real barrier to the possibility of disclosure to others and access to support, through a fear of not being believed. This appeared to be a deliberate strategy on the part of the partner to maintain the hidden and targeted nature of abusive behaviour. Equally, in doing so, it discredited the woman's version of events, effectively silencing the woman for fear of not being believed:

Sheila: I thought nobody would believe me...because butter wouldn't melt, he turns on the charm,(people think) well obviously you must be making that up.

The selective target and location of physical violence in the home is clearly recognised by Shona in the extract below. The woman and the home seems to be the acceptable place for him to express his violence where there are no repercussions, as there would be in public space.

Shona:.....but then on the other side of my head I'm like...he was in a pub with a hundred people and never caused harm to anybody...jumped in a taxi, went to a chinesenever hit anybody

Shona: I mind a sixteen year old put a bottle about his head in Portobello and he came in and licked me up and doon (beat me) for it...and I was all bruised , like all my ears were all burst black and blue right down there...

Julie (researcher): So their public persona is different and their behaviour outside the home?

Shona: I think that's what catches you....

Mary: R would always stay in privacy...never outside...

What has been critical here was the recognition of the hidden and unpredictable nature of domestic abuse that the women had to negotiate between their public and private lives and particularly within their home environment. The additional complexity of isolation, combined with a fear of not being believed, compromised their space for action in response to the abuse.

Responding

Having begun to paint a picture of the unpredictability and tensions of daily life in an abusive situation, the next theme explores how women responded to living under such conditions. Early understandings of women's responses to domestic abuse theorised a learned helplessness model (Walker 2009) based upon women coming to believe that any individual actions against domestic violence were futile. Subsequent work in this field has challenged the way this portrayed women as passive victims, leading in turn to contemporary understandings of women's responses through a survivor model (Gondolf and Fisher 1988) that recognises that women become increasingly active in their attempts to stop the violence and abuse (Goodman et al. 2003). Despite this shift in focus, attitudes persist in media representations of women survivors as being responsible for ending the abuse through overly simplistic and ubiquitous questions of 'why doesn't she just leave?' (Berns 2009). The women in this study demonstrated a range of responses in the face of their specific circumstances.

Resistance

A major tactic of coercive control is to wear down a woman's resistance by attempts to convince her she is lazy, incompetent, ugly, a bad parent, a poor wife; effectively worthless, on the basis that an individual who feels worthless has no will to resist (Stark 2007). The current dominant survivor theory challenges previous ideas of a passive victim, based upon recognition of how women respond to abuse with innovative coping strategies that they develop from their own unique experiences (Johnson 2008). Fear and courage are present at the same time, are not separate emotional states and their complex interaction is crucial to the way that abused women negotiate their situation (Pain 2012).

While the women painted a picture of anxiety and hypervigilance it was not a life framed in terms of passive victimhood. All of the women had developed strategies of resistance. Despite a climate of unpredictability the women had learned to read the signs and responded according to previous experience of what worked in particular situations, to minimise the risk to themselves and their children. Other times action had to be taken in the immediate moment. Such a moment is captured in Photo 5 below:



Photo 7: The waiting chair

Sheila: So that's the chair...blocking the door...trying to make sure he can't get in, he was steamin' (drunk) and hoping he would pass out on the other side.

The symbolism of being behind that door, as discussed earlier, reinforces that tension, in some ways painting a picture of the woman as powerless yet in reality taking action to protect herself in the moment. Other acts of hiding were reported as

desperate moves to avoid a predictable fate despite knowing that the consequences may be more severe:

Shona: I mind hiding and kidding on I wasnae in just so he'd leave me alone.

'Cos he would come in and like drag me from my bed and he wasnae a man who took no for an answer.... One night I was hiding in the wardrobe...like the bairn's wardrobe, it was only his wee wardrobe no the proper size....and I'm hiding in this tiny wardrobe hoping that he'll no find me or he'll no come looking for me...he's like screaming the hoose doon going mental butI suffered for that.

Occasionally an extract like the example above painted a picture of anger or loss of control on the part of the man. Yet, most of the women recognised that any appearance of a loss of control, resulting in violence, consistently occurred as a result of him not getting what he wanted as opposed to his alcohol use. In this way men were clearly responding to acts of resistance by a process of escalation in order to re-establish their control in the relationship.

However, all strategies of resistance were recognised by the women as carrying risks. Women clearly became accustomed to evaluating risk and safety on a daily basis. Angela had learned from experience that her husband had a tendency to threaten her with his chef's knives after drinking as represented in the photo below. So hiding these became a necessary safety response.



Photo 8: Cutting edges

However, sometimes women attempted to fight back, either physically, or by calling for external help. These were high risk strategies that were seen to have serious consequences. Despite a belief in the power of a man, women described sometimes seeing this as the only option. This idea of the power of a man was referenced several times by a number of women:

Mary: I got R charged once and it was the worst thing I could have done. The polis took him in a room and they actually slapped him about... I was in...the doin' (beating) he gave me was unbelievable!

Shona: I mind trying to fight back.

Mary: then you've got the power of a man...

Shona: I mind trying, like he was choking me, he had me pinned on the couch and like he was a big man ...and he was choking me and I could feel like my ears were ready to popjust like the pressure. I thought the only way I'm

getting out of this was to kick him in the nuts and I did....but I would never have done it again, or the guts to even attempt it again....'cos I came off a lot worse, a lot worse.

Other safety strategies discussed by the women were more tactical, for example actively persuading him to drink tea laced with sleeping pills. This reluctant admission by Sheila, of using such tactics, provoked a positive and supportive reaction from the group. Others also acknowledged that they had taken similar actions.

Sheila: Well I did, cos he never used to want a cup o' tea but if I could convince him he wanted a cup o' tea before bed I could put a sleeping tablet in it and he'd pass out in his chair. But if he widnae take a sleeping tablet I ken I'd be getting (hit).....

A sense of the extremes that some women were driven to in attempts to contain men's abusive behaviour and secure their own safety in the short term is conveyed in the extract above. For Sheila, the scenario was described in a context where he was drunk and she articulated her belief in the inevitability of being hit under these circumstances, although at different points in her narrative she admits he was as abusive when sober. The act of convincing him to have tea allows her to seem compliant and caring while at the same time exercising agency in doing what Kelly et al. (2014) call a continuum of 'safety work'; work that all women undertake to manage their risk of violence from men, thus living in conscious relation to domination. In this context Sheila is performing an act of safety planning (Goodman et al. 2003) as she anticipates his behaviour rather than acting in the moment. What was key about this act of resistance was the way that Sheila took some control back in a subversive way that was a subtle form of sabotage (Scott 1987), hidden from her abusive partner. Although severely limited in their choice of actions that may be seen as resistance, these women can be "...seen as exercising 'control in the context of no control'" (Stark 2007, p. 216).

Admitting that she had gone to such extremes was clearly a heavy burden to carry. Sheila described being scared to admit to this when first attending Women's Aid, for fear she would be reported to the police. One clear benefit of the Photovoice group

scenario was the recognition of 'not being the only one', as others shared taking similar actions, as well as entertaining darker thoughts. However, taking action that compromises a woman legally or morally is risky as it may make her more vulnerable to control should the abusive partner find out. As part of this discussion, Shona shares in the extract below how her experience led to an insight as to why some women go to the extreme of killing their abusive partners. What was also revealed here was a sense of entrapment; a belief that there was no escape because of men's determination and sense of entitlement. Equally she recognised the freedom and power held by men in contrast to that of women:

Shona: But I do understand why women kill....because THEY dinnae give up. and they can go away and have all their relationships and whatever...and they'll leave you for a year at a time or six months ...but they still come back because in their head you're theirs!

While none of the women using sleeping pills to drug their partners alluded to attempting to kill them, the discussion suggested an awareness of this as a seductively powerful fantasy (Lempert 1988), and not an unreasonable response in the face of the tenacity of abusive men. Such subversive actions allow women to at least imagine a possible future (Scott 1985).

These tactics of resistance whether overt or covert demonstrated women living consciously and actively in relation to dominance and abuse, yet predominantly doing so on their own. Each of the women talked about feeling isolated, often recognising this, on reflection, as a deliberate tactic by their partner. The photo below captures this sense of isolation:



Photo 9: Alone

After a while people stopped coming round. I was alone, no friends, no-one I could call.

Isolation serves a specific purpose. As long as the victim maintains other human connection the perpetrator's power is limited (Herman 1992). By positioning themselves between their victims and the outside world, perpetrators become the primary source of interpretation and validation (Stark 2007). The need to maintain

the secret of abuse was not articulated, although it was implied and contributed to the need to manage their situation alone.

Left to their own devices meant resorting to private strategies of resistance (Goodman et al. 2003) that ranged from placating him and appearing passive, to open resistance by attempting to change his behaviour. What was conspicuous by its absence from the discussions was reference to calling upon external help, informal or formal, in terms of dealing with this behaviour on a regular basis. Calling the police was only ever mentioned in relation to an extreme incident, often when a critical point had been reached. Friends and family were absent from the stories, negating the possibility of informal network strategies of resistance (Goodman et al. 2003). Family and friends tended to appear more in stories of recovery and reunion when relationships had been re-established. This implies a stage model where women move from private attempts to stop the abuse, to more public strategies, as their hope of being able to change the men's behaviour on their own diminishes (Lempert 1996).

While these extracts have focused on the topic of what women considered alcohol related incidents or behaviour, they were only part of the picture painted. It is important to consider the bigger picture of other abuses that came through in the discussions in order to understand the context of their everyday lives and their individual responses. Some women apologised for going 'off topic' when they spoke of their wider experiences, but 'people not seeing the big picture' was one of the broader issues that the women collectively agreed upon. In addition to the task and time regulations described earlier, all of the women reported a range of controlling behaviours; locked in house with children on a regular basis (Mary); the bathroom door was removed, creating a degrading lack of privacy and full access to her physically and sexually (Shona); hanging her by her feet out of an eighth story window, an act that she described as needing his physical power and control (Mary); not being allowed a house key or a purse (Nessa); constantly checking on her by calls and texts (Shona). Overall, the women's experiences challenged any notion that abuse involves a loss of control on the part of the man, in contrast, the evidence paints a picture that clearly requires considerable control on his part to exercise such a diverse range of tactics. The women were clearly describing coercive control (Stark

2007), supporting Johnson's (2008) typology of intimate terrorism where the violence, threats and intimidation are part of a wider web of entrapment. In this context the abusive partner will do whatever is necessary to have his way.

Across all of the participants there was a consensus that the worst and riskiest possible form of resistance was any bid for independence, as Nessa describes below:

Nessa: ... in fact that is what started off the final time that he tried to kill us, 'cos I went for the job and I said the wrong words. I said I wanted my independence back. You dinnae say that!

Julie (researcher): You said that to him?

*Nessa: Oh huh...You dinnae say **that word**.(participant emphasis)*

Julie (researcher): what happened then?

Nessa: Oh he went mad...that was the start, it was like a red rag tae a bull. That was likeooofffff...

Julie (researcher): This idea of you being independent?

Nessa: Far too much for him, aye. That was the night he ended up putting me through the glass door and I ended up in hospital

Despite having at some point been partners in a small family business, Nessa had reported being highly controlled financially, therefore a job would open up access to not only financial resources but also outside sources of support. Other people are considered a particular threat to the abuser's control as they may help the woman understand what is happening to her and encourage her to resist or leave (Johnson 2008). Such independence opens up further potential avenues for resistance and threatens his control, therefore must be shut down.

Some attempts to curtail bids for independence were masked as support and kindness. Sheila described how her husband paid for driving lessons but then harassed her before every lesson by accusing her of having sex with the instructor, as well as repeatedly undermining her ability to pass her test. Some were more

blatant, with accusations of affairs being commonplace. Shona was accused of infidelity when she went to Asda for the shopping, forcing her to change her shopping behaviour involving a much longer bus journey. What was clear was the considerable effort that was invested by the men to make a compliant victim, equally the emotional and psychological work and risk assessment required by the women in their part of what Stark (2007, p.232) calls “the dance of resistance and control” .

Emotions

While the context described here by each of the women participants was one of an abusive relationship, it was also an intimate relationship where each was married or living with their partner. Such a relationship can be reasonably assumed to have begun from mutual feelings of love. In relation to managing and responding to their situation the role played by emotions was significant. Yet, love was only explicitly referred to by some of the women. Only one woman talked directly of love in the role it played in her desire to help her abusive partner, but others talked about care and duty.

Barbara: They do say that love's blind and for years I'd say no. But see now, it was...I was totally blinded with him...I was totally in love with him and I would have done anything to please him, to make him happy, to help him.

Shona talked of the loss of the person whom she once loved to addiction but also how glimpses of love, or the person they fell in love with, could be seen through random acts of kindness in a sea of abusive episodes.

Shona: Aye, you see that person you sort o' fell in love with coming through.....they dae something like make ye a cup o' teaand..

Angela: Ye think oh, they're being nice tae me ! (surprised tone)

Shona: I ken like mine's run me a bath and it was like the best Christmas present I had had.

Angela: I used to say to my pal how he'd really been nice to me and made me a cup o' tea and she said.. "that's no(hesitates)anything out of the usual".

The need to hold onto such acts appeared to reflect the desire to find some indications of love and care in a deteriorating relationship. Some redeeming feature that showed that love was not all lost. Discourses of love are widely used to make sense of feelings and relationships in general (Jackson 1993), while the belief that love can conquer all can be found in cultural narratives and may bind women to their partner, despite abuse (Towns and Adams 2000).

Women have been constructed, through practices of love, as being responsible for care and emotion work within the relationship that may include care of the partner and the relationship as well as the household and children (Donovan and Hester 2014). Significant among some women's accounts were expressions of care, affection and a sense of responsibility and protectiveness towards their partner that impacted upon how they responded to abuse. While many of the responses and management tactics described previously related to immediate or ongoing physical safety, several of the women talked of the paradoxical need to support their partners emotionally, particularly following an abusive episode.

The act of the abusive partner presenting as, or being perceived like, a child was common to a number of the women. While Barbara was the only woman not dealing with a partner who used alcohol, she still experienced such situations, so they were not always related to post drunken remorse. Women's responses to these situations clearly left them conflicted:

Angela: It is more I like you knew how to humour him. Because it was like I'd married my da, because he was the same. There were three sisters and we all knew how to humour him. Like talking to a wee bairn(child).

Angela: I cut myself trying to take the knife away...I used to be sitting there feeling sorry for him and I'm sat there with a big gash across my hand.

While Angela recognised a need to 'humour him' from previous experiences with a father who was a problem drinker, she expressed surprise and the irony of the situation at finding herself feeling sympathy for him when she was the injured party.

In the extract below Barbara demonstrated the conflict and difficulty she had in recognising this as a deliberate tactic. The recognition that he is old enough to know

right from wrong sits in contrast to his presentation as a little boy. But equally she recognised the active manipulative element where he ‘turns it around’ on her and ‘turns the tears on’, particularly in response to being challenged by her:

Barbara: But...you get to a certain age and you know right from wrongand I mean, I tried my hardest to understand him, I triedbut he used to just turn the tears on and say "help me" and wi' women being nurturers they cannae help it...he looked like a little boy. I was like ...god I've got to help him...while I'm helping my black eye, or

Barbara: In the beginning I did challenge him a lot because I was quite a strong person and I wasthen for some strange reason, he used to turn it around . After he hit me, he would start crying ...and he looked like a little boy that needed help and I would go and help him and forget about...

Shona: I was like that wi' mine and he was like six foot four and built like ..a big guy. I'd have him breaking doon....I'd be all burst open, my hoose would be in bits, no telly or nothin' for the bairn(child) ...and I'm cradling him!!

This analogy of the man presenting ‘like a child’, ‘a wee bairn’, a little boy in need of care and support, despite having just committed a violent act, appears as a deliberate tactic or strategy to invoke a particular response. Men appear to temporarily challenge their position of masculinity and power within the relationship by expressing emotional neediness, normally considered a feminine trait. In doing so they elicit feelings of sympathy and emotion from their victim who are responding to their role of managing emotion work in the relationship (Donovan and Hester 2014). Barbara even acknowledges this response as something that women cannot help; “*wi' women being nurturers*”. But this did not sit easy with the women.

The temporary nature of men constructing themselves as dependent on the woman and the extent she is willing to go to ‘help him’ is highlighted by Barbara:

Barbara: So I went and studied em psychology and...I was trying to help him understand why he was like that. But he didn't want help. He was quite happy in who he was. Although he would say "yes, I want your help" ...in realityit was his way or no way.

Women's identities as carers are clearly being deliberately manipulated to give the impression that the power balance appears to be reversed. Appeals for compassion and understanding, appearing to put his fate in her hands, can be part of a reconciliation phase that aims to break down her psychological resistance to his abuse (Herman 1992). Equally such acts can be part of the apology device used in remedial work (Goffman 1971, cited in Cavanagh et al. 2001, p.700), a range of tactics used to mitigate the abuser's own culpability. Throwing themselves temporarily on the mercy of their partners is clearly a deliberate controlling behaviour. These extracts highlight the power of gendered discourses of women as carers, both in the way men may wield them for their own purposes, and the internal conflict created for women when they respond to them in these abusive circumstances. Such conflict clearly contributed to the difficulties women faced in making sense of their situation.

Making sense of it: "When you are out of the situation you can see ..."

I now turn to the third theme identified under the overarching theme of managing the lived experience of domestic abuse. In order to manage their day to day life women were constantly faced with the challenge of making sense of their situation. Privately, faced with various combinations of men's alcohol use, physical abuse and a range of emotional controls, the women faced a complex task of trying to make sense of what was happening to them. Complexity was enhanced by cultural narratives and discourses around domestic abuse and alcohol use, available to both men and women. Aspects of these were reflected in the narratives of all of the women regardless of whether or not alcohol was involved, but as the research topic related to alcohol, women's accounts tended to focus on the role they believed alcohol played. The idea of not being able to see, until you are out of the situation, was indicative of the isolation, entrapment and lack of space to consider broader perspectives that were available to them after leaving the relationship.

Whose version of reality? How men and women constructed and accounted for abuse

The women's accounts indicated ways in which they were influenced by how their partners constructed and accounted for their abusive behaviour. In this way

understandings of, and responses to, abuse were interactional (Cavanagh 2003). Shona was the only woman who repeatedly used an addiction narrative to describe, and to try to make sense of, her partner's behaviour. This was clearly informed by how he drew upon this as an excuse accounting for his abusive behaviour, in particular the related memory loss.

Shona: ...used to make excuses wi' the drink and the drugs...well he did "Oh I cannae rememberI was too out of it..."

Shona: The thing he used wi' me was that I didnae understand, that he had an addiction and I didnae understand. He was right, I didnae understand what it was like to be addicted but I lived on the other side o' it. To me he had it easy 'cos he could just forget, eh? I dinnae ken if he genuinely forgot or not.

Several common tactics are identified in the above extract. Using memory loss as an excuse was a common form of denial specifically related to men's drinking. Denial is a significant feature in men's accounts and this form of selective amnesia is one way in which they exercise power in relation to the meaning of the experience (Cavanagh et al. 2010). Shona is clearly struggling by resisting the validity of such an excuse. Whether he genuinely forgets or not, the power appears to lie in the ambiguity that this creates. Claims of forgetting and the introduction of ambiguity were reported by a number of the women, and are clearly powerful tools that operate as a silencing strategy as women start to doubt their own interpretations in light of his definition (Towns and Adams 2015).

Yet, he doesn't only use the memory loss as an excuse. By further attempting to impose some blame onto her for not understanding, her duty as a wife and partner is being called into question. As discussed earlier, a highly gendered essentialist discourse of women as carers is being accessed here, as well as expectations that women are responsible for the success of the relationship (Donovan and Hester 2014). This can be understood as a more nuanced, indirect form of victim blaming that aims to undermine her success as a wife and supportive partner. Additionally, the inequity of the situation was clearly felt by Shona as she couldn't forget, and was left living with the reality of experiencing it, and trying to make sense of it. In this way he passes the emotional burden onto her while absolving himself of responsibility.

This extract below, from a different discussion, challenges the image of the sorry, excusing, apologising character that he constructs himself to be, and exposes the level of domination and control being exercised by her husband:

Shona: I mind when S broke my nose and he fractured all my cheekbonesI was bruised from there to there and all down one side cos he'd put me doon the stairs...I mind wakening up...and I couldnae move. I was saying to him "you'll have tae go to the shop" and he was stood over the bed and he was like....actually laughing at me, like proper laughing!!

....he went doon the stairs and sat on his dominating chair...as he did being king o' the castle and like I had to wait till it got dark....

Shona: That time it was drink....but in sobriety...it started...it progressed....it wouldn't be him physically hitting me but it would be him...punching holes in walls, throwing things or smashing things....which made me quite feart (scared) anyway...one thing he flung at me was a bottle of Lambrini....walking along the road, I dinnae ken why...he kicked off...anyway and he actually chucked the bottle at me. I think I was questioning him about something. I was asking him about something because something didn't sit right with me...and his response...that was in sobriety.

I would say it progressed...the more he became dependent on the drink and the drugs, the more violent he became...and it escalated, he became so erratic and unpredictable that you just didn't know.

In the face of such conflicting experiences Shona was still able to recognise the underlying objective of control. Our Western culture offers “vocabularies of understanding, motive and significance (Wood 2001, p. 241)” to help people construct meanings attributable to their personal experiences. The addiction narrative that Shona was being asked to buy into is a compelling, culturally acceptable one that positions alcohol dependency in medical terms, and therefore strengthens the ‘blame the drink’ discourse as an excuse. Institutional talk or narratives are useful in constructing a woman’s understanding of her situation (Berns and Schweingruber 2007), but to doubt or challenge such an explanation is to challenge expert knowledge. Therefore, it may provide an account that allows Shona

to accept that he has no control over his behaviour despite evidence to the contrary. She goes on to justify this explanation with reference to underlying external factors in his life:

Shona: Aye and you find that most people that have an addiction have suffered abuse in childhood or have reasons for....

The appeal of external factors as justification was also reflected in Barbara's narrative:

Barbara: So he had a da' that didnae cuddle or show love and a mum that thought he could do no wrong - this is how I understood him to a certain degree

Women clearly struggled to inhabit these contradictory messages and explanations.

The emotional turmoil experienced by Shona is clear from this photograph and its meaning. Emotional pain is not readily observable, therefore, it is difficult to establish causal relationships between men's emotionally abusive actions and women's pain (Lempert 1996). The photographs are therefore a useful device in articulating such difficulties:



Photo 10: Dead inside

In a dark place.

I felt worthless, empty and dead inside.

I had no voice.

Shona: In the dark as well, the graveyard one as well. It's like when you are living with addiction it's a progressive illness so like as they're becoming more dependent on alcohol, or drugs.....the less they are from the person you met ...it's like you are sort of watching them slowly drift awayor like their soul

slowly dying like, until the person becomes unrecognisable....

Shona seriously struggled with the feelings of loss, of the person he used to be, of the person she first met. This loss of the person to addiction as he became 'unrecognisable' aligns with her earlier talk of not knowing who she would be facing every day, and the ongoing unpredictability of how he presented. But the man who claimed addiction was the same man mocking and laughing at her. This creates serious inner turmoil, and clearly the search for coherence falters in the face of contradictory claims, beliefs and experiences.

However, other members of the group challenged the addiction narrative:

Angela: I think that's an excuse sometimes so they dinnae have to be responsible for...

Shona: ...their ain actions, maximise yours and minimise their ain...or deflect eh?

For others the answer did not lie in addiction as they challenged notions that drink was truly to blame.

Angela: But he wisnae addicted to drink that was maybe what the difference, it was just now and again. He was nasty without drink... but if he had a drink, he was worse. But he's a nasty person anyway so he didnae need drink to do it but drink made it worse.

Faith: I went through the scenario where it was the drink (to blame) but even when he hadn't been drinking he was violent

Sheila:...its just people how they have drink, if they've got that thing in them, they don't need the alcohol, it is just like a smokescreen to covertheir behaviour

The need to find a reason appeared to lie in a reluctance to believe that the man they were in an intimate relationship with, and may have children with, could really be that 'bad'. Yet they were faced with much evidence that supported this reality. The recognition by most women that they had accepted or made excuses at some

point during the abusive relationship was clearly problematic for them. However they also identified this as a survival process that had become necessary to just get through the day as reflected in the dialogue below:

Julie (researcher): Do you think you excused his behaviour a bit more when he had a drink.?

Sheila: I know I'm gonna start making excuses for him

Val (support worker): you do...you excuse their behaviouryou do minimise it in your head. That's no making excuses, its how you get through your day...

Sheila: Well you've got to try...personally you've got to have a reason why he did that...ken. He couldn't have been that bad person....

Val (support worker): but he was....

Sheila: You did make excuses because it was the only way...it was like a survivaljust a survival process.

The struggle to clearly distinguish between the role of alcohol and his choice of behaviour was further reflected as Sheila disclosed an act that left her permanently disabled. This belief that 'drink destroys families' was repeated by her on several occasions despite her acknowledgment that it was not the cause of his abuse. The implication here is that drink, as used by the man, is a dominant part of the breakdown of the family. Yet the onus still appears to be on the substance not the person:

Sheila : Because it does destroynot sure if I was ready to share this...but em, it was a car accident, my back. But he deliberately drove over me and he wisnae drunk when he dun that and you think that's just pure evil...

Val (support worker): again though it's very clever on his part ...that's to make you immobilised ...to make you completely dependent on him...

Sheila: and you go you cannae live like that but you get so used to the norm of it! It was like my normal...aye, so....so...it destroys families.

These accounts recognising the men as nasty, capable of evil deliberate acts, and drink as a smokescreen, equally challenged notions of men out of control, yet the underlying tendency to focus on the power of the substance remained. Two key factors worthy of note were the compelling nature of the 'blame the drink' discourse in society and the contrast between being persuaded by that discourse in the past 'when they were in the situation', and what they now understand having been 'out of the situation' for some time. One explanation for the difference may lie in the way that simplified narratives as used in the media, such as 'blame the drink', fail to capture the complexity of women's experiences but at times of living through that experience they were readily available to serve as a survival strategy.

There also appeared to be tensions between the two points in time, which implies some increased level of understanding was acquired after leaving the relationship. All but one woman had attended a recovery program through the Women's Aid service called the Freedom Programme, and a number of them referred informally to how through that program they had come to better understand their experiences. In particular, that 'blame the drink' or 'blame the woman' was just an excuse used by perpetrators and had no valid grounds. However, there was evidence that they still at times struggled with rejecting such discourses.

Denial in general was prominent in women's reflections upon men's accounts; denying the abuse happened, denying drinking was an issue or in one case, denial despite an available witness:

Shona He used to call the bairn a liar, mind he had said I fell doon the stairs but the bairn said.. 'mum, he pushed you',and the bairn still goes back to this.....and he says 'dinnae be so fucking stupid, he's lying" ...the bairn was five at the time ...why would he be lying?

While excusing and denial were used to create confusion and ambiguity, blaming the woman for abuse was by far the most common tactic. This mainly took the form of 'if you hadn't done that', shifting the focus always onto the woman's behaviour and non-compliance with his regime. (A more specific tactic of blaming the woman's drinking is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.)

Shona: Oh aye, if you hadnae done that or said that...totally questioning

myself and you were probably the same likehe blamed a lot...everything was my fault he never took responsibility

Justifications for violence were often framed around women's failure to meet the ever changing and unpredictable demands and needs of the abusive partner or having the audacity to challenge his authority. Often it was less around specific events but more through verbal undermining of them as wives and mothers leading to women's self doubt and self blame as indicated in the extracts below:

Mary: I put up wi' itI thought , "was it me ?" I dinnae ken?

Shona: No it's no. I believed that as well. I believed it was all me, that it was all my fault cos he used to make it very clear " if you hadnae had said that, that widnae have happened" . "If you would have done this...I wouldn't have kicked off. You wouldn't have that sare face".

Blaming the woman was often focussed on demands related to food, sex and domestic duties as discussed earlier in the context of men trying to enforce emphasised femininity on their partners: a form of femininity focused on their needs and requirements (Connell 2009). Such failures in femininity, as he required it, were therefore used to justify punishment and re-assertion of his authority. Women had clearly internalised these demands around emphasised femininity leading them to be self critical for failing in what they saw as his expectations of femininity within the relationship.

Several women had talked about any bids for independence having been thwarted and used as a justification for violence. The extract below demonstrates how constructing herself as independent was seen by Barbara to transgress the type of femininity required in marriage, thereby making her somehow responsible for the abuse:

Barbara: I used to blame myself for being so into men's jobs rather than women's jobs. I used to think...maybe if I was more feminine and I done the dishes...and I done the housework and I had a sparkling clean house....but that's no' me, I was a worker and I didn't like women's work.

Conflict existed between the version of herself that she was required to be and the previous version of herself, the person she truly was. In this extract below she articulates her dilemma:

Barbara: : where I've had a lot of problems with my man is that I am a very strong woman and I'm not the kitchen type, cleaningI was a builder, I was a steeplejack, I was a mechanic...and I think a lot of men don't like that because I was brought up to be equal with men. My dad had four daughters and we were brought up as equals....not better but not below. So anything a man could do I could do ...but he hated that....

Barbara's experience exemplifies how men whose masculinity is challenged also find ways to attack and demean an intimate partner through knowledge of their vulnerabilities. In doing so they break them down from the person they truly are to the compliant victim who can also be held responsible for their own victimisation:

Barbara: you see I was severely dyslexic....and he knew that. Every time he wanted to get to me he'd say..."you're thick, you're stupid ...you're dumb " (said in gruff voice)

Julie (researcher): he knew your vulnerability?

Barbara: Or he would fling something at me and say "fill that in" and then say....."Oh right you can't because you're thick and you're dumb and you're stupid! " The putting down, I think, was the worst, the mental thing was the worst....physical, it healed ...em I would rather have taken a punch than be verbally abused, the verbal it never went away.

Shaming is a recognised tactic of coercive control (Stark 2007), but this idea of 'stupid' was also reflected in the way that women talked about not recognising what was happening to them: for not seeing that they were experiencing abuse. This self labelling has been highlighted in previous research and identified as a form of gendered shame within this context (Enander 2010).

Similarly, men also drew upon powerful discourses to attack women in their roles as mothers. Accusations of being bad mothers created a fear of public ridicule, formal

sanctions and loss of child custody, as well as effectively attacking an important part of their feminine identity:

Shona: And then they make you feel bad about what they're doing to us...and then...no just that...they break us doon mentally. "Look at you you're a terrible mother, you shouldn't even have thay bairns. You leave me, I'm going to take you to court , I'm going to take thay bairns"

This multi-faceted tactic of abuse links to a broader theme of judgement and is explored in detail in Chapter 6.

Such examples reinforce the way that the definitional hegemony (Lempert 1996) of the men enabled them to not only enact abuse, but to define its meaning and cause in ways that created adequate ambiguity and confusion. The power to define is a reflection of the power dynamics within the relationship, part of the relationship rules that state that the abusive partner is the key decision maker that extends to deciding upon the version of reality that is to be used (Donovan and Hester 2014). This power makes the man's voice one of authority, often in the absence of others, creating a state of doubt and confusion that may lead to a harmful condition of doublethink: holding contradictory thoughts and beliefs in their head at once (Pain 2012). Negotiating this unreality of contradictory definitions and rules (Williamson 2010) may lead women to believe they are going crazy, a common experience across the women in this study.

The madness: "it was about the madness"

Living in a continuous conflicted state was captured in the concept of living in 'the madness'. This was a term suggested by one participant and taken up by the group to reflect the overall conditions in which they lived and struggled to make sense of their individual experiences. Living in conflicting versions of reality caused women to doubt their sanity and was reinforced by explicitly being told they were crazy by their partners. Shona's photo below represents the darkness and difficulty in making any sense of what was happening to them:



Photo 11: Dark and light

I'm going to the light but I've been here all mixed up and tangled, on a dark path.

This idea of madness was taken up in multiple interrelated ways. A professional working with survivors of domestic abuse highlighted how the impact of being repeatedly exposed to the man's version of reality caused women to start to doubt themselves:

Stakeholder 8: Yeah, That's what the women call it....

This unreality thing I think....it's like that film Gaslighting when the woman thinks she is going mad...cos the man's doing things to her that makes her think she's going mad...so I think women really do think "I am mad".....and what I found when we've been doing trauma workshops and talking about trauma, all the feedback is "So I'm not mad?"

Two women highlighted how deliberate tactics even after separation continued to cause them to doubt her own sanity:

Shona: Mines was breaking in for two years...I thought I was going off my heid. I'd wake up with him standing over my bed.....and he's like " I was going to dae you in ...but like you'll maybe make my breakfast".

and I'm like "how did you get in?"

"You left the windae open, you left the door open..." and it got to the point that I'm thinking I'm losing it, I'm properlylike phoning my gran up and she's saying you're just stressed oot, it's all in yer head"

Sheila: ...then I ended up getting paranoid....because of his work he could prove he was somewhere else although I knew he'd been at the house. I could see my underwear had been moved. He could prove he was somewhere else. I was the one to have a mental breakdown....aye, paranoia.

A further crucial element that impacted upon women's understanding was being able to recognise or 'see' what was happening. This inability to 'see' reflected the reactive nature of managing the situation; doing what they needed to do to survive. Recognition of domestic abuse is dependent on public stories and women's expectations of what they considered normal within intimate relationships. What is

also evidenced here is that element of self blame or critique for not being able to 'see' what was going on, which came across as a form of shame.

Val (support worker): I think when you are out of that situation you can see it but when you are in it....you are minimising their behaviour to cope everyday, to survive almost. Maybe if I hadn't ironed his shirt that way.....

Shona:...it was mad though because even though I lived with it and had sore face and still got the scars, I didnae know....how...I didnae consider it as domestic violence. I sort of ...accepted it..

As Nessa describes her experiences in the following extract she visibly shrinks, it seems to be a display of shame although it was unclear what was the issue most impacting her; being so controlled or not being able to see what was happening to her. Equally, Barbara cringes when reflecting upon how invisible it was to her and the sacrifices she made.

Nessa: I didn't even have a house keyI didnae have nothing...(silence)...I didnae see itken what a mean....never, ever seen it.

Barbara: When you are in it you don't see it. you give up everything. I gave up everything for him ...I even gave up who I was to try and fit in to who he was and.....see when I look back at it now, I cringe.

The inability by the victim to recognise abuse could be attributed partly to the nature of coercive control. As evidenced here, many of the tactics are targeting women's roles as wives and mothers, so are aligned with stereotypical gendered practices. Because most men and women take the freedom of decisional autonomy for granted these violations can be rendered invisible in plain sight (Stark 2007).

What was also evident was a powerful sense of how much energy it took to just survive let alone reflect upon the experiences during that time in their lives.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored how women responded to and managed abusive

situations. The women's narratives and photographs painted a vivid picture of the private and deliberately hidden nature of abuse. But they also demonstrated the dynamic and diverse nature of women's responses, often in conditions lacking external support. The men's alcohol use appeared to add an additional element of complexity and unpredictability to a world already built on shifting boundaries of the rules of the male partner. For this reason, some strategies of resistance were more successful than others and carried different risks.

Women were faced with responding not only to their abusive partners' behaviour but to men's accounts of that behaviour, and managing other people's perceptions of their partner. At the same time they were faced with attempting to make sense of their own experiences in the face of conflicting beliefs and societal discourses. Finding meaning in their experiences in the face of contradictory beliefs and accounts created internal conflict and dissonance between what they knew to be wrong and a desire just to survive and get through the day. This created a need for the construction and reconstruction of meaning in a struggle for coherence. While women's space for action was clearly constrained by the conditions of abuse, so equally was their space for understanding.

This chapter has focused on the context and conditions of the male partner's use of alcohol and the complexities of the abusive context. The next chapter continues to explore these complexities and their impact upon the women's choices around their own alcohol use. The themes are approached through a framework of dilemmas that women faced in making such decisions.

Chapter Five

Women's drinking dilemmas

Annie – you get to have a drink in peace

Nessa – aye, get to have a drink in peace

Nessa - I drink to enjoy, not to forget now

Nessa – no' to numb the pain now, it's to enjoy

Nessa – and what I buy is mine (laughs) - I dinnae need to share it

Annie – aye! (laughter)

Annie – ye can have a drink and ken that after you're no' gonna get hit in the mouth

Nessa - exactly!

The above extract came from informal chat at the Photovoice introductory session as the women started to discuss the topic. What is interesting is how it encapsulates the change some women had experienced across time in relation to their choices around drinking. This chapter examines women's space for autonomy in this respect.

The previous chapter explored the conditions of living with domestic abuse that included coercive controlling behaviour, aimed at retaining power and control over the women. It incorporated evidence of how living with a heavy drinking male partner further complicated those experiences. In particular it highlighted the complexity and constraints that the women had to negotiate in their everyday lives during that period. A key finding was the limited autonomy available to the women. This chapter develops this idea of choice in relation to their own alcohol use. Analysis of the data identified an overarching theme of dilemma in this aspect of women's experiences. A modern interpretation of a dilemma is a situation where a difficult choice must be made between two or more alternatives, especially ones that are equally

unfavourable. The unfavourable aspect is traced to its original use as a technical term of rhetoric or logic used in an argument where the alternatives were traditionally called ‘horns’; thus the expression ‘on the horns of a dilemma’ that alludes to a devil like representation and captures the tensions of the double difficulty (Oxford Dictionary 2016). On multiple levels this analogy relates to the title of the study ‘Same Hell, Different Devils’ as chosen by the women to represent their overall experiences. This concept is also strongly linked to the evidence from the previous chapter where women reported never being able to do the right thing. Three key dilemmas were identified, are captured in the Figure 3 diagram below, and are explored in detail in this chapter.

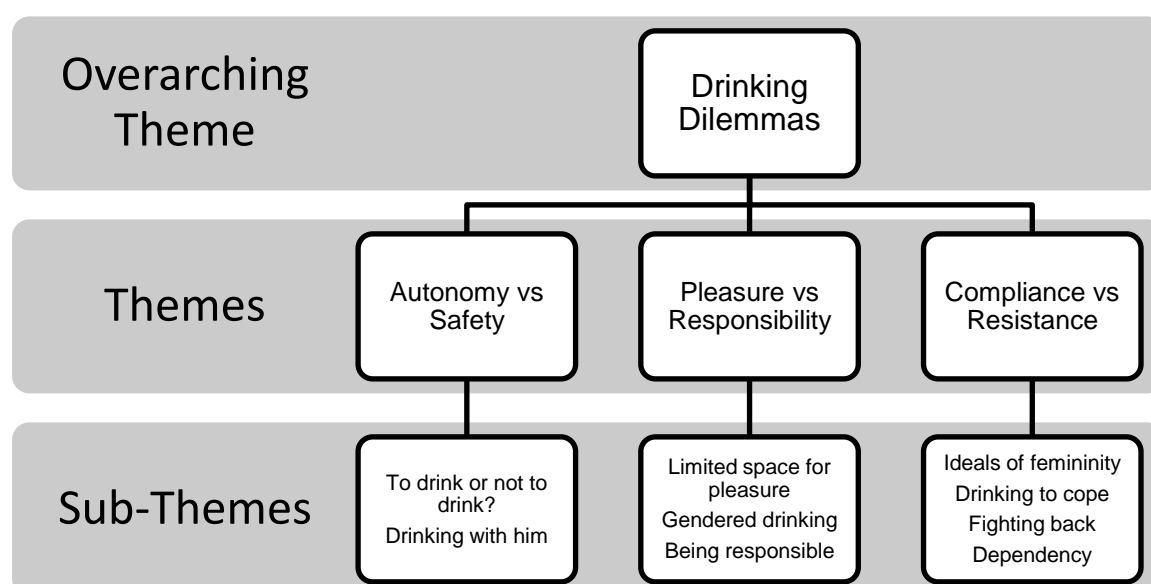


Figure 3: Theme map ‘Drinking Dilemmas’

Autonomy vs Safety - “we didn’t choose this”

In discussing the women’s alcohol related choices it is important to remember that they were not only living in an abusive relationship but were existing in a broader culture of gender inequality. Despite the development of more egalitarian societies, women’s alcohol use has repeatedly been a focus of public concern with persistent double standards in relation to attitudes to women and alcohol (Plant 1997). Additionally they were open to the influence of living in 21st century Scotland; a

country with a commonplace attitude that consumption of alcohol is part of the Scottish way of life (Bromley and Ormston 2005).

While all of the women were clear that they did not choose to be in the position of being abused and controlled, it raised the question of what degree of autonomy they had in their own drinking, within that context. Autonomy can be described as “a sense of separateness, flexibility and self possession sufficient to define one’s self interest...and make significant choices” (Herman 1992, p.134). It was clear from the discussions that the women had experimented with alcohol use in a variety of ways at different times and in response to different circumstances. A professional support worker commented on how the meanings and motivations for drinking shift accordingly:

Stakeholder 6: I think that with using something like alcohol is that there are ebbs and flows with it, there will be times when people do feel worse that they could be using it as a coping mechanism, but it might not always, so there is an ebb and a flow so it's not like a continuum...(drug and alcohol support worker)

To drink or not to drink?

While some women had very strongly positioned themselves as choosing not to drink, choosing abstinence as a strategy to stay in control, as their stories evolved, there were references to each of them having experimented at some point with drinking as a way to cope with the abuse. However, within the group setting there appeared to be some reluctance to admit they had tried to use alcohol in this way. In the extract below, Sheila described a need to ‘catch herself’ and the way in which her voice lowered and diminished, implied that the direction she was heading was in some way wrong, and must be corrected. Her talk and demeanour appear to indicate an element of shame or embarrassment to admit such a choice:

Sheila: ‘cos for a while I was sort of hitting the alcohol myself a bit too much just to numb everything...but ...eh...but I sort of caught myself and thought I'm not doing this.....so no....I don't drink....(voice lowers and trails off)

While it is not unusual for individuals in Western cultures to use alcohol and other substances to cope with the difficulties of everyday life (Bancroft 2009), there still exists an element of a double standard where women who do so are made to feel ashamed (Waterson 2000). Differing levels of awareness of this was reflected across the group discussions. As Nessa started to talk about her alcohol dependency, one other group member repeatedly responded to Nessa's disclosures with a contradictory comment, always positioning herself as an abstainer in response to the abuse. This appeared to close Nessa down to some degree, yet she had been one of the most enthusiastic to participate and talked openly in the introductory session about her alcohol dependency and recovery, and seemed keen to tell her story. There was no apparent intent here on the part of Faith to impact on Nessa's story, but it appeared to be important for her to be seen to adhere to the dominant narrative that expects women to remain in control in relation to alcohol.

To examine these different levels of meaning does not detract from the practical need articulated by the women to make decisions that maximised safety under these circumstances. The need to use abstinence as a safety tactic was, for some, clearly directly related to the ongoing need for hypervigilance described in Chapter 4 and the ability to respond to the next threat or attack.

Faith: It was much more about him drinking and me keeping my wits about me. To be honest I just widnae take a drink as I wanted to have my wits about me.

Shona: I felt when I was around him I always had to be on high alert so drinking widnae have helped me remain on high alert...but there was times when I thought "ken what, I just want tae escape" and I would like drink a

bottle o' wine but to me like a bottle o' wine is enough to knock me oot for a week. Em, I would drink a sort o' bottle of wine to be able to fall asleep or escape fae what I was living wi'

Julie (researcher): So the choice of not drinking was really a conscious one. This staying alert was ...

Shona: Fight or flight really....

Yet Shona describes this dilemma between a desire to escape through alcohol and this need to stay vigilant:

Shona: ...but then I did go through different stages where I drunk to escape . I mind him going out all weekend and being like...I was left inside my ane mind which drove me insane.

Shona summarises the way that, what for many would be a simple decision to drink or not, becomes loaded with a range of risks to be navigated.

Shona: ... I felt mair anxious. Especially when he was first oot the door...I've had this drink, what if he's goin' to come in? How am I gonnae like be able to get to here, or get to there or how am I gonnae get to that phone....cos alcohol delays your reactions, so that didnae work for me.

In the broader social context the idea of drinking to cope has wide appeal yet at the same time using alcohol as a crutch is judged negatively (Waterson 2000). Yet, from a professional perspective, some regarded it as a reasonable and effective response to trauma and the associated hypervigilance.

Stakeholder 5: You can even be traumatised....if someone gets that from traumas previously they're just going to be walking about like this all the time ...it will be hard to feel safe and engaged...and if you're hyper vigilantit's drink! a great one for knocking out a bit of hyper vigilance.

A number of stakeholders recognised the value of drinking to cope until the point where it is experienced as harmful for the woman. The concept of positive and negative drinking (Ettorre 1997) is a useful framework through which to understand this.

As with the majority of their decisions, women constantly had to balance multiple risks to minimise harm to themselves and their children. In this respect, deciding whether or not to drink in this context was no different but the perceived risk factors were. Discussion of traditional alcohol related health risk factors were conspicuous by their absence in terms of their decisions to drink. Women are constantly

scrutinised in the media and targeted with alcohol related public health messages about their physical and mental health (Plant 2008) and media moral panics about their feminine health (Day et al. 2004). Yet in the testimony of the women in this study there was an absence of talk of considering drinking as a risk to their health unless indirectly mediated through the abuse by their partners. This suggests that the risks they negotiated in relation to abuse dominated their decisions.

All of the women described living in conditions that were highly controlled by their partner. The most common reflection of this was the lack of decisional autonomy and freedom of expression. This web of control extended to the women's decisions to drink or not, whether such controls were implicit or explicitly expressed by their male partners.

A number of the women reported being regularly taunted by partners for not drinking at all or not drinking with them. Coercion to drink more, or to drink with them, was framed around accusations of the women failing as wives and partners by 'not having anything in common', 'not being any fun', or 'being boring'. Here the men challenged the quality of their relationship, laying the responsibility for this on the woman's behaviour, and not their own. Women's responsibility appeared to extend to making the relationship work by putting their needs and wishes aside. This links to a recurring need discussed in the previous chapter for women to do what was necessary to appease him or keep him happy. This also aligns with how relationship rules and practices of love operate in abusive relationships, where the relationship is for the abusive partner to meet his needs, with the woman's needs secondary (Donovan and Hester 2014).

Drinking with him

Drinking with him was constructed as a potential safety strategy by some women. Being present with him was considered a strategy for preventing him from 'kicking off', but one that may have negative consequences. In the series of extracts below, Shona captures the paradoxical nature of such dilemmas. In trying to prevent accusations of sexual jealousy by going drinking with him, so that he could see she was "*no doing anything, no up to no good*", ironically she opens herself up to displays of jealousy. Sexual jealousy from their partners was readily recognised by

the group as a common risk they faced in public drinking spaces. Links between women drinking and accusations of promiscuity have a long and unfounded history (Day et al. 2004).

Equally she runs the risk of him manipulating the situation to publicly shame her should she drink too much or appear intoxicated. Embedded in these reflections is a common belief that women cannot drink as much as men, and a fear of what might happen if she allowed drink to create a loss of control. Ideals of femininity and what is considered appropriate behaviour for women are being called on here, but what is not articulated is what she thought would happen if she allowed herself to lose control through alcohol. Even attempts to 'make life easier' through compliance to his wishes may leave women open to other opportunities for him to abuse her:

Shona: ... you think, well I'll have a drink with them and he'll maybe no kick off...for me that's how it felt...so I'll have a wee drink wi' him and if I'm with him he knows that I'm there and he knows I am alright ken, I'm no doing anything, I'm no up to no good.

Shona: Aye, but if I was to be open and honest there was sort o' times when I drunk wi' him thinkin it would make life easier but in turn it didnae. I couldnae even go to the bar for a drink and it'd be like...'you're flirting wi the bar man and I'm sitting here watching and you're no even caring'.

Angela: and if he was at the bar wouldn't he be talking to everyone

Shona: I think em...if they're bad drunks as well, I think we can get caught up in drink with them cos we get this idea that if we have a drink with them he'll stay calm....but we cannae drink as much or as quick as they can so ...they would maybe manipulate it and turn it round and be like "oh what's wrong wi' you, ye ken everybody's talking about ye" or what have ye, but at the same time you were feared (scared) to drink because you were feared of what was going to happen to you if you lost that control....

In many ways these dilemmas capture a common theme reflected in the women's stories of not being able to do anything right, as the boundaries and rules, explicit or implied, are constantly changing. Negotiating these dilemmas in relation to drinking

introduces a further level of risk for women and new opportunities for the perpetrator to berate and shame. In trying to '*keep him happy*', she must demonstrate that she is a good wife, try to manage his behaviour by keeping him calm, yet risk losing control by drinking against her will. Shona draws upon a number of beliefs and gendered discourses that reflect a requirement for women to comply with men's wishes, yet remain in control in public space or risk the consequences. Such substance use coercion can be subtle and hidden in public space due to the power of these discourses, and the stigma attached to women out of control through excessive drinking, which play a key role in allowing such tactics to succeed (Warshaw et al. 2014).

While for some it was a matter of coercion, Mary reported how she did not drink when they first got together, but described how her drinking had developed over time into a physical dependency through an ongoing process of physical force, intimidation and fear:

Mary: He was quite a bad man...well he would tie me doon, and sit on me ...I never drunk, I hated the smell of alcohol and he would hud my nose and I couldnae wrestle a big man...Going back then R would tie me doon and pour straight vodka down into my throatand he made me drink....I'm no saying he made me ...but I was frightened not to have a drink with him...on a weekend.

Julie (researcher): what was his reaction to your drinking generally?

Mary: He hated it! "well you started me....why did you pour vodka raw and really choking me ...bringing sick up and everything " Handcuffing me from behind ...ken how the police use they wire ...cable ties...nothing can squeeze your hands out of them. I felt so powerless against him.

The fear of non-compliance is clear and supported by a belief that she could not fight back, yet is still qualified by a reluctance to blame him for making her drink. Both narratives are underpinned by fear on multiple levels. Fear of the consequences of non-compliance, fear of losing control, fear of the partner's disapproval. Fear plays a fundamental part in domestic abuse that keeps it going. Feelings of psychological entrapment have been found to be a result of fear; fear of abuse when the abuser's

rules and demands are not complied with. In turn, psychological entrapment compounds chronic fear (Pain 2012). Mary frequently referred to the power he had and how powerless she felt that suggests a real sense of psychological entrapment and isolation.

Mary's overall story was rife with self-blame she associated with her behaviour as she developed a physical dependency on alcohol. She takes the blame for destroying family relationships through her dependency on alcohol, yet her story is equally littered with evidence of shaming and extreme abuse perpetrated upon her by her husband, and blame being directed at her from her children as they grew up.

Fear as a feeling does not live in a social vacuum and is profoundly affected by reactions of others (Pain 2012). All of the women were aware of the risk of being publicly judged and held responsible for their abuse if they drank to excess:

Stakeholder 5: Also the fear that people are going to say 'You deserve it'....somehow if you admit that you drank that...I think almost all the women I have spoken to have taken some blame for the domestic abuse and then because they are also drinking, that's a double blame. "Well maybe if I didn't drink so much" . Although some of them will recognise "I'm only drinking so much because of thatbut maybe if I didn't drink so muchhe wouldn't beat me up..."

This evidence suggests that women's choices of whether or not to drink, where to drink, and how much to drink, were heavily influenced by their partner's abusive behaviour, coercion or force underpinned by the experience of living in conditions of chronic fear. Strategies of abstinence were chosen by some, but it was unclear as to whether the motivations were purely pragmatic, or influenced by broader social influences that require moderation on the part of women drinkers. This suggests that very little room for autonomy existed within this context of control, raising in turn the question of whether there was any space for pleasure within this limited space for action.

Pleasure vs Responsibility

Although only three of the participants self-identified as having suffered from alcohol related problems, experiences around alcohol had clearly become loaded with negative associations for all of the women, leaving very little space for pleasure or leisure. Each had described living in general conditions of coercive control, with limited freedom to express their own views, and all reported feeling isolated from friends and family. One of the key influences over women's decisions to drink alcohol was a sense of responsibility.

Limited space for pleasure or leisure

While most of the women did not specifically talk of being directly forbidden from going out and socialising, control over such behaviour was exerted in a variety of ways. Nessa described how she had little access to money due to financial control by her husband, despite being partners in their own business. As she became addicted to alcohol on her husband's terms, he equally ridiculed her for it: alcohol becoming a further tool for control and shaming. She described how her alcohol problem also contributed to a breakdown in her relationship with her children and her siblings.

When asked about alcohol:

Julie (researcher): was it part of the control?

Nessa: Totally...

Nessa: I didnae have any money. He had it all...I didn't even have a purse! My daughter got us a purse when I left..

Julie (researcher): So the access to your alcohol....?

Nessa: I didn't even have a house key...(silence 10 secs)...I didnae have nothing...(silence)...I didnae see it ...ken what a mean....never, ever seen it.

In addition to what Nessa described in relation to her access to alcohol, what I observed was a physical shrinking and change in voice, her voice and almost her body became smaller, shrinking into herself and casting her eyes down. Nessa had

talked quite openly and boldly in the group about her relationship with alcohol, in particular around the damage to family relationships and the related recent recovery of those. This raised the question whether talking about being so controlled in this way was more shaming or embarrassing for her than the alcohol dependency itself which in women is generally highly stigmatised. Her almost apologising for not having been able to see the control seemed to be the source of more shame for her. This idea of not being able to see the relationship as abusive, not being able to recognise his behaviour as abusive, was highly problematic for a number of women as discussed in Chapter 4. Feminists have resisted defining a hierarchy of abuses against women, advocating viewing them on a continuum (Kelly 1988), but this raises questions as to whether there exists a possible hierarchy of shame in the dual experiences of alcohol dependency and domestic abuse.

It was only in recovery from abuse and working through her alcohol dependency that Nessa was able to find a positive and pleasurable experience in relation to drinking. She expressed this through her photographs, all of which were about her own recovery and the rebuilding of family relationships. One example below:



Photo 12: Proud

Time to enjoy my full positive glass of wine

I dinnae run in the door and pour myself a glass of wine whereas before I did.

I was dependent, I was thinking to myself how can I get home....it was in my brain...I need to get home...cos I need this drink. Now I come out, I socialise....and I dinnae smell (laughs)

In the creation and description of this photograph Nessa captures her desire to do what she perceives “*normal*” people do; to come home from work and enjoy a big glass of what she called “*positive wine*”. This suggests that drinking may be seen as a positive act in a woman’s life if she is not dependent on it, allowing her to be accepted socially if she behaves moderately. Her comment about how she used to smell was made with nervous laughter and a certain discomfort. It was not made clear exactly how she smelled, it was assumed to be a strong smell of alcohol on her breath, but her awareness of it as a stigmatising condition was evident. In Goffman’s (1963) theorising of stigma this may be considered a stigma signal, as might a woman bearing black eye in public, one that draws attention to a possibly devaluing characteristic about that person’s identity.

Also encapsulated in Nessa’s story was a celebration of independence in getting a job, recovery from abusive relationship and a shift to controlled drinking. But once labelled as a problem drinker, or the “*alcoholic of the family*”, and having worked through the necessary recovery steps, Nessa felt under constant surveillance by her family and subject to a double-standard of behaviour as others in the family appeared to be free to drink to excess. More freedom to participate in acceptable drinking practices appeared to still come with conditional constraints not applied to other ‘normal’ people. In this case normal applied to those not labelled alcoholic. This suggests her space for leisure or pleasure from alcohol was still restricted.

Barbara, who had also self identified as experiencing alcohol dependency describes how drinking began and progressed in relation to the abuse after having other avenues of leisure and pleasure shut down by her partner:

Barbara: so it was more sort of loneliness and I thought like “I’ll have a couple o’ drinks” and it sort of cheered you up a bitit started off to cure the loneliness and then it ended up that I needed it.

Barbara: I started having just a couple at night and thought this is actually quite good...I can block him off and then it ended up going a half a bottle every night, vodka....and then at weekends it was a full bottle. ...and from the day he hit me and I eventually stood up and said....enough is enough....I phoned the police....I have never touched vodka. I’ll have a glass o’ wine at

the weekends but I've never touched vodka.

For Barbara a change back to pleasurable drinking had been a result of escaping her abusive relationship. For Nessa it had taken time after leaving the abusive situation, and help from Women's Aid, to recognise and accept that she had a problem with alcohol and then address it. In these examples, pleasure in drinking could only be found after separation from the abusive relationship, if not always immediately. But contrastingly for Mary, a third woman self-identifying as alcohol dependent, such dependence continued for many years as a legacy of the abusive relationship and was only ever talked about in negative terms.

It is useful to consider alcohol use and abuse as both sides of the same coin by using Ettorre's (1997) distinction between positive and negative drinking, defined in terms of how it is experienced by the women themselves. Drinking that may start as being experienced positively, as described above, may lead to physical and emotional problems, or external disapproval, so in turn becomes negative. But equally there can be a return to a positive experience under changed circumstances.

In some cases specific drinks appeared to have negative associations. Spirits, especially vodka or whisky, were talked about as being used under conditions of dependency and negative drinking for women. Vodka and whisky also featured in stories of men's accounts of drinking, where their demonic properties were blamed for changing their behaviour and making them violent. Spirits were also talked about in negative terms in relation to the way young people drink 'now' as compared with how some of the women drank when they were young. However, wine was framed by most women as a drink to be enjoyed in a positive way, often with a meal or sharing with friends. While wine is often considered a feminine drink, it also appeared to be talked about in relation to moderation and not excess.

However, others did describe attempting to have a social life that included alcohol during the relationship. Women have traditionally been associated with home and the private sphere. This has been reflected in the traditional drinking cultures of women centred in the home and the development of the pub as a distinctly masculine domain. Yet despite claims of a feminisation of drinking culture, with more women drinking outside of the home, such behaviour is often portrayed in negative

terms (Day et al. 2004) and acceptance of women in public drinking space is an ongoing challenge. Hey (1986) has pointed out how men have coped with women's presence in public drinking spaces by either tactics of segregation or abuse. Angela had talked about attending a local social club. Both she and her husband were members and sometimes attended the club together or separately. While her husband did not openly try to prevent her going out, when she attended the club she was repeatedly subjected to verbal abuse by her husband creating feelings of embarrassment:

Angela: We'd be at the same place, he'd sit wi' the men gambling and putting bets on and I'd sit wi' the women but he didnae like it, didnae like it that I was goin oot and sometimes he'd come up to me and say 'you're sitting there wi' your lesbian pals' and he'd shout and swear at me in front o' everbody.

Even when she went elsewhere she was subjected to his abuse:

Angela: he'll get drunk and then come down here (bar). You were always on edge, wondering what's he gonna be like if he starts shouting, will he embarrass me...he usually went there, got drunk then came where I was....he always turned up where I was. My pal would say there he is, he's at the door and he'd just be standing there and I was trying to gauge what mood he was in.

While men did not always specifically prevent women from going out into social spaces, women reported multiple ways that these experiences were hijacked. A woman going out on her own appeared to present a threat to the abusive partner's control: an act of resistance. As highlighted in the previous chapter, acts of resistance were regularly met with a reclaiming response from the male partner. This reclaiming of control was attempted publicly and verbally through by a tactic of public embarrassment and intimidation of the woman. The intention can be presumed to return women to the home, to their proper place and prevent further transgressions. A number of the women talked about being tracked down and embarrassed in this way. Such public shaming suggests that not only can a man can behave badly in public drinking spaces without recourse, but also that the woman is somehow responsible by association for his apparent drunken behaviour, if he is her husband

or partner. Women often felt embarrassed in public by their drunken partners even when this had not been the abusive partner's intention.

It is clear that the need for hypervigilance was always there and extended into public space:

Shona: You're maybe tryin' to have a good time but you're never relaxed...every time a door goes, you're constantly lookin'. and he would turn up and kick off, or he'd drag ye back hame oreven doon at my pals just doon the road and his mum phoning me and she was like ..."you need to get back up the road he's hame, he's goin' mental"

Shona: I started...I sort of rebelled a wee bit I started goin' out wi' my palslike ken that now the bairn's a bit older, I am going out! I'd go to the gay clubs just so, thinkin' he'll no come in here but he eventually...he always found me.

The need to always anticipate their partner's reaction is reflected in Shona choosing a gay space as a safe haven, a choice sometimes made by women who need to feel safe and escape "unremitting masculinity" of heterosexual drinking spaces and the threat of male violence (Skeggs 2005, p.10). While she articulated her choice of gay clubs as a place he is unlikely to attend, presumably due to his masculine identity, there was an implication that this may also protect her from accusations of sexual jealousy should he find her there. What was also highlighted here was the extended policing of her whereabouts as his mother participated in the job of surveillance and control. Surveillance is an important part of coercive control where even family members may become complicit in the act (Stark 2007). Shona's decision to go out drinking was a clear act of resistance, one even she describes as '*rebellin'*'. But it is also one she had to justify as being acceptable only because her son was of a certain age, implying her responsibility could be relaxed but equally it is risky behaviour that has to be planned out. The vigilance that is required in trying to do something that most women could reasonably expect to do freely is indicative of women's entrapment in personal life.

Sexual jealousy featured in a number of the women's accounts, particularly in social spaces that included other men. This meant that for some women drinking was

confined to home, even if it had not always been that way. Tactics of deliberate isolation are a core part of the technology of coercive control and appeared in different forms across all of the women's narratives. Barbara describes going from being an occasional drinker and a bubbly outgoing person to having an alcohol dependency and the way, over time, she is isolated and starts drinking at home in secret. She articulates how her partner responded to her being around other men:

Barbara: No...he hated it. Even if they spoke to me, he hated it. so eventually over about two years we stopped going to the bike club. "(He'd say) I'm no going tonight." ..and I wouldn't go on my own, I am an old fashioned person that you go with your man or you dinnae go at all....em... and he knew that, he knew I wouldn't go without him.

He shuts down her social space that may give her access to other men using his intimate knowledge about her commitment to marriage and traditional values. But this was part of a wider pattern of deliberate isolation that left her with limited options and created the conditions for her secret drinking.

Barbara: Yes...he isolated me from my friends, he isolated me from my family ...when he was in, I had to be in... ...and then, I had nobody to speak to.

What is clear here is the tenacity of the abuser's response to any bid for independence. Women out in public spaces, especially drinking spaces, represented a risk to the men's sense of ownership, in particular leaving the women exposed to accusations of sexual jealousy. This in turn is underpinned by a moral double standard of appropriate behaviour related to historical association between women drinking and sexual impropriety. As women attempted to create moments of autonomy, abusive partners launched what Stark (2007, p. 217) calls "search and destroy missions".

Gendered drinking spaces

While Angela previously described intimidation and embarrassment enacted deliberately by her husband in their regular drinking spaces, she also talked about the highly gendered and segregated nature of this club environment. As the group discussions moved beyond the personal experiences of domestic abuse and alcohol

to a wider social context, it was clear that the women recognised how public drinking spaces had the potential to be sites of power for men and intimidation for women. A number of the women had described how the feeling of hyper-vigilance lasted long after the separation from their partner, making them particularly nervous in crowded spaces. Always having to be able to see the exit, keeping their backs to the wall and being anxious around drunk men were some of the ongoing manifestations that required a need for vigilance that extended beyond the intimate relationship.

Despite the feminisation of the night time economy in many parts of the country, encouraging women's alcohol consumption, many people are still frequenting public local drinking spaces that have resisted such change and still operate under more traditional male dominance and control (Hey 1986; Valentine et al. 2007). Some bars found in the local formerly industrial mining community of the participants tended to reflect this resistance to change in the gender order.

Two of the women in particular found commonality in their negative experiences of such local bars. Although they recognised that rules were changing, their experiences demonstrated that attitudes persisted and continued to be perpetuated within the next generation of young men. Segregated drinking spaces with men's spaces referred to as the 'cage' and the 'jungle' were recognised by the women as outdated, yet still threatening. Although women are officially allowed to enter and share such masculine spaces, intimidation continues as reflected in the dialogue below:

Antonia (support worker): You're allowed in it but still when you go in there it's that kind of...threatening look to say...really? Should you really be in here? Actually you should be in the lounge...and for me being ballsy me (never used to be). I used to go wi' someone who drank in the cage who used to try to isolate and was very emotionally controlling, so I would never ever go in there....but I think now, women are morethe more they're understanding the stereotypes they are trying to challenge them the more they are going in there.....but it's still that ...the name of it "the cage"

Angela: Aye "the jungle".....it's no that I want to it's about not being told you cannae go in there..

Angela: Older men are now drinking in the hall saying ' that's ridiculous...women shouldnae be allowed in here" . I had to ask before women were allowed inyou had to walk through for a cigarette....and the bowling green , the jungle had a window onto it but I had to stand outside to watch it....

My sister's in a wheelchair severely disabled. "Can I take her through the jungle to go to the toilet? "I asked the chairman and he said "aye ok"....but when I started to take her through, all the men started shouting at me and young laddies "you're no allowed to bring women in here...get outta here". We were only going a short distance...

Antonia(support worker): The fact you had to ask....

Angela: it's that asking, havin' to ask a man cos they're in power, they make all the decisions.

In line with a cultural trend to reduce segregation of drinking spaces Angela described how she had become involved in progressing such changes at her club. Here she describes the backlash she experienced for her actions:

Angela: Their committee it's like been the same for years....they tried to get me barred after what I'd done....my pal got barred for 6 months so we all stopped going for 6 months....some of the men in my age group , a bit younger were saying no maybe they should be allowed to come in. but it was mair older men or the younger ones....the way they'd talk to me I'd say 'do you talk to your mother like that?'they've been brought up to look at women as second class citizens.

This awareness of power still being in the hands of men was clearly understood despite women challenging the gender order. While the backlash against change was almost anticipated in the older men, greater concern lay in the experience of intimidation and sexist attitudes being acted out by the younger men enacting their masculinity in their domain, trying to regain control by intimidation. What is evident here is that what Stark (2007, pp.232) calls "the dance of resistance and control" , discussed previously in the context of the abusive relationship, extends into public drinking spaces.

In contrast, others were concerned with other social change in the blending of spaces for eating and drinking and the trend towards those being marketed to welcome families, thus exposing family outings to masculine drinking practices:

Sheila: I also I think, showing my age.....now everywhere sells food....come eat with us, and you can bring your kids....went to Wetherspoon's for breakfast and at the back of nine am a big load of men came in to buy pints....I thought that's disgusting! How come they serve it that early....

This unease was combined with concern over representations of family life in soap operas being centred on the pub. A normalisation of drinking culture invading family life, both in reality and media representations, clearly presented a threat to family life in the views of some women. Similarly, concern was expressed by women regarding the ubiquitous presence of alcohol in all aspects of Scottish life; family celebrations, funerals, rewards at work and the effect this may have on family. It is interesting to note that the group appeared to be divided in their overall attitudes to alcohol. Women who had not self identified as experiencing alcohol dependency themselves appeared to hold more negative attitudes, whereas those that had, expressed more positive attitudes. Of course, the size of this group makes it impossible to generalise. It may also be that the negative attitudes existed before the abusive relationship or were more grounded in their experiences of their male partner's drinking.

Changes in legislation as well as marketing of public consumption may have unforeseen consequences for women's choices. A support worker comments:

Stakeholder2 : One thing I did find interesting was when they stopped smoking indoors and a lot of women stopped going out. They'd go to the bingo and sit in the bingo hall and smoke, have a drink and have some fun outwith that male environment. A lot of women stopped going out and it increased their alcoholism as they were just stuck at home as well. (freelance support worker)

Overall, there was recognition of a continuing need to resist male domination and intimidation in gender segregated drinking spaces, which continue to restrict women's experiences of leisure and pleasure in public drinking spaces. Simultaneously women highlighted a need to protect children from an overexposure

to representations of the normality of drinking as a dominant factor in family life. Such discussions tended to be framed around the women's responsibility as mothers.

Being responsible – “someone has to be responsible”

While attempts to find leisure or pleasure around socialising and drinking were actively limited by men's tactics of control, women also faced dilemmas regarding what they saw as their responsibilities as mothers. Despite the majority of the women being mothers, talk of children had not been particularly prominent until it came to talking about their own drinking:

Shona: I think as a parent if you are in control of your drinking habits if you go on a night out you are aware...the last thing you want to do is have a hangover wi kids that are up at 6 in the morning and having to stand and make breakfast when you're feeling squeamish...

Sheila: and you have to do the school run...and even then..if you come in drunk it's like"she widnae go to sleep" ...But my husband would never have thought of ...I'll no drink the night in case the kids are up.....

Having to drive in the morning and do the school run were acts that most of the women considered their responsibility. These accounts emphasised how mothers retained the main responsibility for children. While Shona frames it in neutral terms of a 'parent' needs to be in control and consider the responsibilities for children, it is clear from the broader discussion that the women considered this responsibility lay firmly with mothers who had to remain 'on duty' at all times. Even when Sheila experiments with drinking as a coping mechanism she is pulled back by her responsibility to be a decent parent, contrasting this with the lack of paternal responsibility taken by her husband:

Sheila: ... it was just to numb meem, but, naw. It made me very depressive being so drunk all the timeem and as I say I just thought naw this isn't the way to goI thought "god the girls need to have at least one half decent parent".

This was underpinned by a recognition that women must change their drinking habits from the time children are conceived to adapt to the responsibilities and expectations of motherhood:

Sheila: Well I was ...throughout my 20s I was either pregnant or breastfeeding so I never really drunk much....went in to my 30s and I did drink a bit but if I had a night out I still had to get up in the morning for the kids so I never drunk much, and em... How I am now, I do still have an occasional drink but I'm not supposed to drink with the drugs I'm on (for pain).

These accounts need to be considered in the context of other parts of the women's descriptions of regularly waiting at home with children while partners enjoyed a freedom to drink and socialise with minimal responsibility or consideration for children. A clearly gendered discourse is in play here of men having the freedom to look outwards and act in the world, leaving women as inward looking focused primarily on the family. Yet this traditional image of motherhood is at odds with the majority of women also having to consider responsibility for their jobs. Two of the women had the responsibility of being partners in business with their husbands and one talked of always having to be clear headed as she dealt with high value transactions in the financial sector.

What was absent in these accounts was a contemporary discourse of motherhood where appropriate attention to maternal responsibilities is balanced with attempts to find 'me time': space for relaxation and autonomy as found in other work exploring women's experience in non-abusive relationships (Emslie et al. 2015). Indeed, dominant constructions across this study of the need for women to be responsible carers and nurturers in a self-denying way clearly conflict with notions of female pleasure beyond the family unit.

Compliance vs Resistance "it's more than just coping."

Ideals of femininity

The previous findings on the importance of women needing to be responsible around alcohol, connects closely to not only the pressure to be compliant with their abusive partner's rules and regulations, but to comply with societal ideals of respectable femininity as defined in a patriarchal society. As discussed earlier, a number of the

women worked to take up subject positions of themselves as respectable drinkers through a discourse of abstinence or moderation, and a need to stay in control:

Shona: I drunk wine to help me try to fall asleep but eventually you've got to reel yourself back in eh?

Sheila : I mean I know if alcohol, if people are wise about it....it does sort of break down your barriers and puts a relax on and adds toI still have, when I normally have a drink now it's when I'm having a really good meal, it just adds something. Like everything, people veer too far and it ends up there.....I'm making excuses again....

It was clear that their attitudes to alcohol had shifted through the life stages as they had all talked about how they had drunk when they were younger but a number of the women had come to adopt a negative attitude to alcohol that appeared to be related to their individual experiences of the abusive relationship. However, on widening the discussion beyond their own experiences, there was a consensus that women are judged differently in relation to drinking and other substance use:

Sheila: No just with drink but with most things....but it's no seen as acceptable.

Shona: But it's no just alcohol, it's smoking....it's....people think it's more disgusting for women to smoke...

As the discussion continued it tended to focus on young women, in many ways mirroring the regular media focus on young women's drinking often framed as problematic and a 'moral panic' (Day et al. 2004). There appeared to be some sense of 'othering'; setting themselves apart from how young people drink, again implying a sense of being more responsible now that they are older and wiser.

Sheila : its no like when I was young...it's all 'I'm having these shots, these shots'.....the alcohol content in that is probably what I used to drink the whole nightthinking I was getting peeved(drunk) on a half pint o' snakebite.

However the women did recognise the double standards that must be negotiated and located them clearly within the context of gender inequality:

Val (support worker): It's like a woman falling about coming out of a night clubit's disgusting but a man falling about it's all righta lassie taking her shoes off cos she can't walk in them any more...

Sheila: but obviously if she's falling about you end up seeing parts o' her that really shouldnae be seen and... It's no just alcoholsociety finds acceptable ...men do things and women don't....it's still a very big male/female divide

The double standards discourse connecting alcohol to assumptions of female sexual promiscuity is picked up here by Val:

Val (support worker): but focusing on the alcohol point of view it isif a lassie or a woman is drunk in the street they are looked upon as bad mum, slag, can't look after hersel'look at the state o' her.....you see a laddie stotting(staggering) up the street....what do ye think?

The women further related this to the injustices they perceived taking place in rape cases where alcohol was involved, resulting in victim blaming. Although the women tended to frame this discussion around others, particularly young women in public space, there was a sense that these concerns translated into risks that all women who chose to drink had to navigate. There was also a recognition of how drinking makes women vulnerable therefore implying a need for personal responsibility. Links can be seen in how such victim blaming attitudes were also reflected in the regulatory regimes of the abusive partners. One woman was prompted by this discussion to recall a comment made by her ex partner in relation to their own daughter:

Sheila: I remember when my oldest one started going out...B went "she better no' be drinking, I don't want a slag for a daughter" .

Drinking to cope

Coping is defined as the actions taken to avoid or control distress. Women's coping responses are active, constructive adaptations to experiences of abuse (Kelly, 1988, p.160).

Kelly (1988) equally suggests that coping should be considered an act of resistance. Four of the women who had self-identified as having had an issue with alcohol were open about their own drinking and its associated problems. To describe alcohol in general terms as a coping mechanism clearly over simplifies the women's experiences. They framed their drinking in response to many aspects of their experiences, but rarely directly related to the physical abuse. In particular, the women who developed issues with alcohol described how it started as a need to 'escape', a need to 'numb', 'to hide', and a need to 'forget' and how it escalated over time.

Deliberately isolated by her husband Barbara described loneliness within the abusive relationship as being the initial trigger:

Barbara: it started off to cure the loneliness and then it ended up that I needed it because I would get anxious if I didn't have it and so....I think loneliness was what started me away on it.

Shona: You start to escape what they are making you feel so you'll maybe have one or two...before you ken it....I mind I was going through a bottle o' wine a night! Just tae get bywe all done it.

This idea of escaping was common, but differed in what women felt they were escaping from. For some, it was about escaping their own conflicted feelings and emotions about what was happening to them: knowing it was wrong but being unable to change it. This appears to link closely to the earlier findings in Chapter 4 relating to the difficulty the women experienced in making sense of what was happening to them. Shona described needing to escape being "trapped inside your own head". This resonates with others who struggled with internal conflict, and is reminiscent of other work that has highlighted that physical violence is not the worst aspect of domestic abuse to deal with (Stark 2007; Williamson 2010). Additionally, women were describing a sense of isolation in being alone in trying to deal with the problem of abuse as well as their conflicting feelings about it:

Barbara: But without the alcohol you have these two wee voices one saying this isnae right and the other saying I love him and it's really difficult to argue with yourself...and its draining. So the painkillers and the alcohol stopped the

voices, stopped the reasoning.....and it just...numb! So it's a way away of hiding from the truth as well because I knew it was wrong but I also thought that I could fix it.

What Barbara articulates appears to be a struggle to recognise what she describes as the truth. This difficulty in recognition and acceptance, that what they were living with was at odds with their expectations of an intimate relationship, was reflected by most of the women. Similarly, they were conflicted by the idea that they could fix the problem if they worked hard enough at it. The realisation that attempts at compliance with his rules and regulations, trying to be perfect, as well as beliefs in the power of love to conquer all had not stopped the abuse. This was hard to accept.

These conflicts also appeared to arise from a recognition that although the abuse had become normal there was a dissonance with that internal feeling just knowing it is not right. A professional advocate articulated:

Stakeholder 9: ...Certainly I think if you've lived with coercive control for any length of time it does become your normality... there's a "mind the gap" between normal and OK. So it might be your normality but if you've got a tense tummy, if you're feeling scared, if you're holding yourself tight and you're jumpy because you know you need to do something ...there's some part of you that knows that's not OK. (advocate)

Normalisation of abuse was recognised as a gradual process, an adaptation, by a number of the women, and was described in a very individualised and personalised way as having become 'my normal', to some extent challenging the concept of normal as some sort of external standard. But equally the implication of how intolerable and abnormal their experiences were, and might be in the eyes of others, was captured in these statements:

Sheila: you cannae live like that but you get so used to the norm of it! It was like my normal...aye.

Sheila: ...by the time the abuse just got in there, I got very deep in the relationship, three kids and very isolated and it's just sort oh...this must be normal.

Barbara: If anybody was to turn back and have a look in...they'd be like what??? (screeches) but to me it was normal.

However, Shona's example appears to contradict assumptions of what might be expected as normal by others outwith the intimate relationship. A sense of self blame and responsibility is conveyed in these statements: judgement for accepting or not being able to see what was happening and by implication not challenging or stopping it.

Shona: I mind going to college at half ten in the morning I got my break and we went back at 12.30....28 missed calls....and me thinking that's normal eh....and if he couldn't get me he'd call my sister or my ma...just to find out where I was and who I was with or if they had seen me...they didn't think anything of it either...

A number of stakeholders reflected the opinion that, in the face of such conflict and constraints, the use of alcohol to cope may in turn be a logical way to handle trauma. One suggests that drinking to get through the day, in that it is an alternative to suicide, may keep women alive:

Stakeholder 8: But actually the role alcohol and drugs plays in that... I think people's addiction and use of alcohol and drugs, keeps a lot of women alive! there's lots of women who if they weren't using drugs or alcohol, they probably would have killed themselves.

While all women who talked of drinking to cope had focused on the psychological issues more broadly, two women highlighted how alcohol was used to specifically numb the experience of sexual assault by their husband. Again, ideas of normal are implied, as contradictory feelings of marital obligation and violation were captured in their accounts:

J: do you think the drinking helped with any of that

Shona:: I think aye, It did...numb it a bit cos wi him....I think I felt I was obligedI didnae ken if it was right or it was wrong, I was his Mrs and his

wife....that's what I should be doing.but like yourself (addressing Mary) I really didnae want to.

I mind him wanting to share me with his pal one night...because I widnae do a certain thing and his pal's wife did...and I'm like....a piece of meat...that's how I felt, a piece....of.....meat.

Mary had also talked at length about her drinking to cope with the abuse for many years, in particular the sexual abuse. Having suffered greatly from health problems related to alcohol dependency she was now a non-drinker. However, as alcohol had been removed as a coping option for her, the normal of drinking was replaced by a mechanism of self harm that persists to this day, many years after the end of her abusive relationship and death of her partner. The enduring legacy of abuse is captured in her photo-narrative below:



Photo 13: Punishment

Mary: so that's what you call the usual Maryit's what I do to masel about once a week....I've got that bleach that's to scrub masel. D (son) has heard me screaming with the bleach because I burn myself that much. So I put it really down here (points to her vaginal area)...I feel just so dirtyit's like once I've done that I feel like I've cleansed my body. But I'm in pure agony after it. ..I felt that was me just getting...like...all the dirt sort of out of meand I still do that to this day.

A study by Williamson (2010) reported how para-suicide is seen as an important albeit dangerous tool that women may use to negotiate their own recovery from internalised damage to self worth. It further shows the lengths to which women will go to salvage a sense of themselves. Herman's (1992) work on trauma and recovery is useful here as it draws parallels with the process of the psychological breaking of prisoners of war, or politics, in captivity. "This state of psychological degradation is

reversible. During the course of their captivity, victims frequently describe alternating between periods of submission and more active resistance” (Herman 1992, p. 85).

These examples indicate the sense of entrapment experienced as part of coercive control; the internal struggle to reconcile the reality of what is happening against the belief that they should have been able to manage it or change it. In addition, they also represent a complex connection between the technology of coercive control and women’s beliefs and expectations of love and intimate relationships.

Fighting back: ‘Drink gives me the courage to fight back’

As has been seen in the previous chapter, women were not passive victims of abuse, but were constantly developing strategies for resistance which took many forms. Drinking may be interpreted as coping mechanism, a form of underground resistance that allows her to reclaim control in what Stark (2007) describes as a context of no control. While none of the survivor participants in this study explicitly recognised their own drinking in this way, it was suggested as a possibility by a number of the professionals.

Stakeholder 9:.....but I think also for a woman it could be her space for control. It could be part of her kind of her underground resistance, to what's going on. It could be he says 'you're not allowed to drink' so her bit of resistance is to have a glass of wine. (advocate)

Stakeholder 8: ...this is about a society that we have developed over the past so many thousand years that allowed men to be dominant and women to be submissive to them...and in that submission, which means women don't have control over their lives . If you don't have control over your life you have to have control over something...your body, children, eating, drinking...whatever it might be.

The comments above are also reflective of Ettorre’s (1997) talk about the acceptable and unacceptable faces of dependency for women. The only culturally sanctioned dependency for women consists of dependency on, and subordination to, men and not dependency on a bottle.

However, the idea of fighting back through alcohol was articulated more literally by two of the women participants. Both acknowledged their belief in the power of drink to take away the fear and give them the courage to fight back either physically or verbally. Although a dangerous tactic with potential negative consequences, both women expressed it in terms of something they needed to do. For Mary, this was repeatedly contradicted by her belief that you cannot fight a man, although this belief was reinforced by the inevitable consequences of any attempt to challenge her husband either physically or verbally. References to how 'powerful' men were and feeling 'powerless' against them stood out in sharp contrast to the acts of resistance the women enacted in the face of such beliefs. Fear was clearly such a fundamental part of domestic abuse that anything that relieved it, be it temporarily, had a powerful appeal. While the women recognised that they could not win, it clearly didn't stop them trying to reclaim some sense of power and control.

Mary: That's how I would turn to drink sort of...it gave me more courage to"I'm no feared of you any more"

Shona: Aye it gives you that

Mary: I always say you still cannae fight a man though...

Shona: I think I started taunting him..." for all the years I've been with you I never seen you hit a man " ..." But you can come hame and knock the living daylights out of me"

Drinking to excess was obviously risky in multiple ways within the abusive relationship. For some, it left them open to being blamed for the abuse, shaming in front of family, accusations of being an unfit mother and the threat of disclosure to the authorities.

On the other hand, hiding the drinking may be considered an act of resistance and choosing when to expose it implied attempts at regaining control. Barbara hid her drinking, describing herself as a 'master of hiding it' because she knew he disapproved of drinking but at a later date she revealed her secret as an act of defiance. The backlash of blame came quickly:

Barbara: Yeah he started calling me an 'alkie' and "no wonder I am the way I am because you're like..."

This type of threat can be considered a form of substance use coercion that allows the man to maintain control and provides a further tool for control. A crucial tactic, the targeting of women as unfit mothers, why, and how this operates, is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

From independence to dependency

The struggle for independence within the relationship was reported as ongoing for all of the women. Any attempts that threatened his control were closed down by their partner. Barbara in particular reflected on how she used alcohol to cope with the loss of self: the independent person she had once been had been replaced with a version of herself. She presented her four photos as a series to represent this downward spiral into entrapment leading to her poly-substance use problems; a journey from independence to dependency.



Photo 14: Life before

Me strong independent outgoing positive happy



Photo 15: Us together

Beaten isolated trapped fear



Photo 16: Coping?

Lost depressed numb using drugs alcohol mess



Photo 17: Reached out

Women's Aid help me learning living life friends happy future looking great

Barbara: Cos when I first met him I was so confident, I had social friends, I had my own business. Within 2 years/ 3 years that's what I became,(locked in)then after 13 years that's what I became (Photo slumped with drink and pills)

Barbara: well I was on anti-depressants, I was on...painkillers, quite heavy painkillers....., I was abusing painkillers as well as drink. Just to try and numbto shut it all out.

For Barbara having compromised her true self in trying to make the relationship work, she described going from a fiercely independent person to someone she barely recognised. Trying to conform to his ideals of femininity compromised her in a way that led her to transgressing normative ideas of femininity by becoming a heavy drinker who lost interest in how she looked.

Barbara: I was always quite a fashionable dresser and it went to being scruffy clothes, t-shirts, jeans...which I would never have worn! I was always high heels, makeup, suit.

Barbara: ...and he was quite happy at me no wearing makeup and putting on nice clothes . It just became the norm ...and then my daughter used to say "Mum, what's happened to you?"

This descent into dependency appeared to operate as a form of compliance that fitted into the web of entrapment created by the abusive partner. Apart from occasional spirited acts of resistance, alcohol dependency, the loss of self respect and the shame that accompanied it made for a more compliant woman. In this respect women's 'choice' of drinking to cope may become another tool for control.

Chapter Summary

The idea of choice within the abusive context was a fragile one. Exploring this through a range of drinking dilemmas highlighted how, as the women navigated these dilemmas, they clearly recognised considerable additional risks introduced in relation to their choices around alcohol. Even the relatively safe decision to abstain exposed them to potential for ridicule. Every decision had to be made with their

partner's reaction in mind. Alternatively, demonstrating compliancy when coerced to drink with their partner, in an attempt to placate him, was an act fraught with risk.

Some risks appeared to lay firmly in the private sphere of the relationship while others overlapped into the public domain, as even local drinking establishments continued to be identified as places of intimidation and control by other men. As attempts at leisure or pleasure were monitored and disrupted by abusive partners in a bid to reclaim control, women were exposed to deliberate tactics of public shaming and embarrassment. Practical considerations to remain vigilant beyond the home appeared to be interwoven with a recognition for the need to be seen as moderate and controlled.

Out of control drinking was considered the domain of 'others', usually young women in public space, yet the risks they faced were recognised as risks faced by all women who chose to use alcohol. What was evident was a minimal space for leisure or pleasure in drinking under these conditions. Alcohol was more likely to be used as a means to forget, to escape psychological distress, or as an act of resistance, each of which carried their own potential consequences. Furthermore, where such use led to alcohol dependency, this appeared to deliver women further into the control of the abusive partner.

Overall, a key moderating factor was the need for women to be the responsible parent in circumstances of abuse where fathers were considered absent or unreliable. The implications of this concept of the mother's responsibility in conditions of abuse are taken up in detail in the next chapter as part of a broader exploration into how women felt judged.

Chapter Six

Being judged: don't judge me!

The third and final overarching theme of being judged encapsulates some of the most significant issues emerging from the group discussions in the Photovoice sessions and across the stakeholder interviews. This chapter will explore the way that women felt judged on multiple levels by different sectors of society; family, colleagues, service providers, the general public, and the power and impact inherent in those judgments. Figure 4 below represents the hierarchy of themes to be covered.

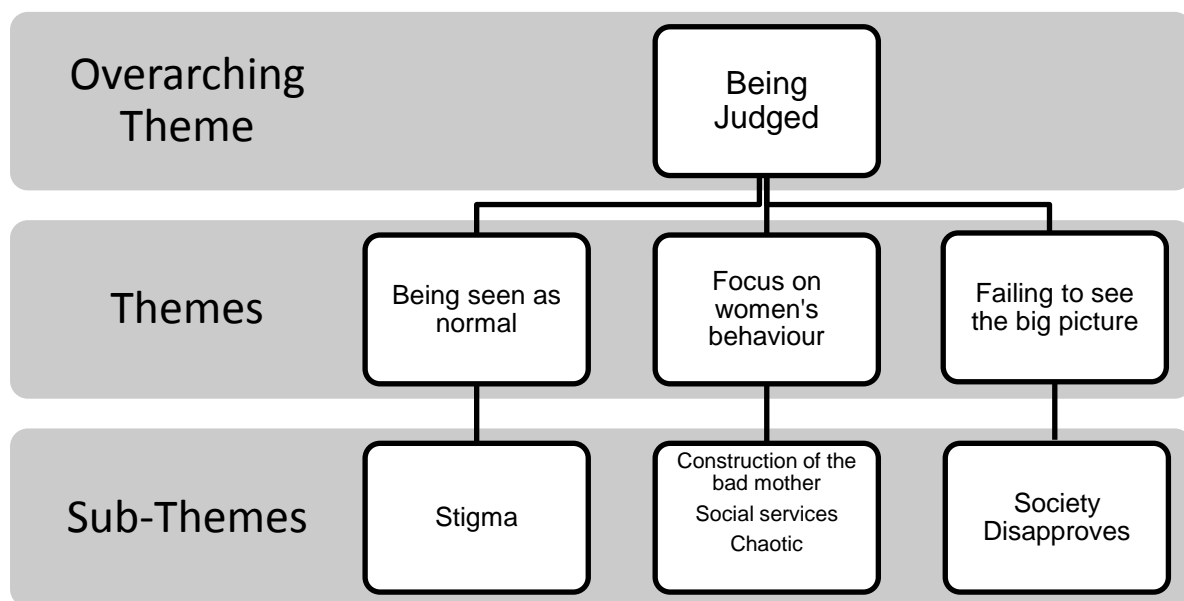


Figure 4: Theme map “Being Judged”

Being seen as normal: “We dinnae have two heids....we're normal!”

While the women may have been distinguished by the extent to which they engaged with alcohol consumption, what they did have in common was the experience of domestic abuse. All women felt that they were stigmatised by the label of being a victim of domestic abuse. The extracts below indicated a strong sense of being

pathologised and therefore judged and marginalised because of something that had happened to them. This idea of being normal stands in contrast to being somehow deviant and therefore compliant in, or deserving of, their abuse. The women strongly resisted this position by stressing that they had not chosen to be abused and so therefore should not be judged for it, collectively stressing; “We didn’t choose this”.

How family and colleagues reacted to disclosure of the abuse was key to a number of the women’s experiences, and their ongoing expectations of support. These interactional extracts below capture a critical and powerful point made by two women during their reflections on a lack of family support and understanding. When early experiences of asking for help were rejected by people they believed they could rely upon, women learned a harsh and damaging lesson.

Shona: I mind my dad coming to me and saying “I knew what was going on but it's no my place to get involved.”...and you're like "you're my dad...are you no meant to get involved?" If it was my bairn I would have been. I think it makes it hard for you to go back and open up to people cos you think if your parents aren't there for youwho else have you got?

Mary: Aye, I was really hurt when my da did that to me.

Julie (researcher): Do you think they think they are teaching you a life lesson?

Shona: I think it's maybe a generation thing....the times they were brought up...my dad was born in a time where the woman's place was very much in the kitchen...with the bairns. So once you're married they don't see that as an issue, you know what you're letting yourself in for...'you made your bed, you lie in it' and it is hard...cos that shuts you down emotionally ...And I think from a lassies point of view you kind of want your dad to protect you. That's your first hero sort o' thing.

In many ways this attitude of ‘you’ve made your bed you lie in it’ reflects a traditional discourse that expects women to accept whatever happens in marriage, but also implies that abuse may be a normal part of intimate relationships. Equally, it suggests that women know what they are getting into and are therefore responsible for their choices and the outcomes. This victim blaming discourse is commonly found

in media reports (Berns 2009) and is reflected in the ubiquitous question of 'why doesn't she just leave?' thus framing women as responsible for ending the abuse. These women appeared to also experience it as an act of abandonment, reinforcing a sense of isolation, of being alone with the problem.

Women are expected to be resilient (Donovan and Hester 2014). The current individualistic, neoliberal culture imposes expectations of self reliance on citizens to keep themselves safe and personal responsibility is emphasised (Braedley and Luxton 2010). Such societal level of personal reliance, it is suggested, runs parallel with ideas embedded in practices of love; that women should remain private about intimate relationships, and a public story that makes women responsible for leaving abusive relationships (Donovan and Hester 2014). Meanwhile during the relationship women felt they had to cope alone, as disclosure was seen as risky.

Stigma

These examples highlight the risks that women faced when they chose to disclose their experiences. Even after separation, disclosure carried risks of being judged. Women in the group talked of the reaction of others as they tried to rebuild their lives after separation from abusive partners. As Nessa engaged with a colleague in a new job, she experienced discomfort on the part of the other person when she disclosed she had lived in a women's refuge.

Nessa: It is like ma work.....I mentioned something about refuge....and one of the women clocked it...and says - she was feared to say it- "did you live in a re..."of course I dinnae give a fuck and I'm out loud "aye I lived in a refuge for two years "and she was like, lookin' at me and I thought... I've no got two heids! (all laughed)

Sheila: When I was putting my toe in the water looking for better things...it was like people were treating me as if I was a leper.....like, oh my god, you've been hit!

Disclosure that they had experienced domestic abuse was clearly experienced as carrying some form of stigma. Erving Goffman's (1963) theorising of stigma stresses the differentiation between what he calls the normal and the stigmatised. People

become stigmatised by revealing, through stigma signals, social information about them that is discrediting, that causes others to re-evaluate the individual. In Goffman's terms carrying stigma indicates having a spoiled social identity. For some abused women the stigma signals may be a black eye, or for drinking women, as discussed earlier, it may be a strong smell of alcohol. In this case it appears that disclosure of past experiences can still act to label individuals as having a spoiled identity.

This idea of deviancy, articulated as being treated like a leper or 'having two heads', constructed the women as abnormal in some way. This construct of being outside of normality was further reinforced as Nessa reported her sister's attitude to her experiences:

Nessa: I spoke to ma sister oncejust having a conversation and I mentioned I am going to court....and she says " oh, that's not my life" (N puts on a posh snooty voice). I actually turned and said to her "it's no my life either, I didnae choose this life! But I wanted tae speak to you" . She hung up on me.

Demonstrating an awareness of such attitudes women reported a level of internalised shame that they carried forward in interactions with others. Talk of the need to hide from the gaze of others for fear of judgement had been present since our introductory session where several women engaged in a discussion about looking down all the time: having difficulty in holding their heads up.

Nessa – I don't any more, I'm trying ...I don't any more , I'm getting there but I do

Angela: I think that's one of the hardest things, lifting your heid up.

Nessa: lifting yer heid up..yer scared as anything

Angela: I always walked like that (head down)

Sheila: I remember when I started coming to Women's Aid I sat eyes down and they kept saying "We're gonna see your eyes, we're gonna a see your eyes and stop apologising for everything ...and I went "I'm sorry" (laughs)

This internalised fear of being judged may be considered a form of gendered shame (Enander 2010). In a society where victim blaming and sexism is pervasive, women anticipate how they will be judged.

This sense and fear of being under scrutiny was powerfully articulated:

Shona: I think.. "everybody's talking about me"...you're shamed, you're....ken, you're scared to look people in the eye.

Mary's photograph below, Photo16, captures the other side of this:



Photo 18: Behind the painted smile

Mary: That's what I feel like...the photo with the clown...that's what I feel like, we all just walk about with a mask on.

Shona: I used to always say that I am painting on my smile.

Mary: There's a song called that ...behind the painted smile. .

Shona: I got away with it for so long though ...you know you've just got to put on a smile cos you don't want everybody knowing or talking or...

The need to present as normal and the need to keep the secret live side by side represented by a mix of fear and shame.

The duality of domestic abuse and what is perceived as problematic alcohol use appeared to generate an additional level of judgment. A number of the women felt frustrated that this seemed to entitle family members to an ongoing right to monitor

and control them. A sense of injustice was again underpinned by a feeling of not being normal or treated on an equitable basis with others.

Nessa : My family, totally, totally. Even my brother and my sister , especially my sister...and I know for a fact that they have a glass of wine practically every night. But they dinnae see it that they've got a problem, they see it that I've got a problem. I'm the alcoholic of the family. I joke and say my brother lives in the (pub name) cos he goes there constantly, he's always there. But to my family he's no got a drink problem but I have. If that makes sense. They're no seeing it.

Barbara: I didn't let people see me drinking. It was a fear that they would put the blame on me for R being the way he was.....plus, I've done it myself. I've seen a girl absolutely paralytic and I'm like " that's disgusting...you shouldn't let yourself get into that state" ...so I even judged people.

In contrast Nessa observed that not only was she exposed to a level of judgement from family for her alcohol use, even though it occurred as a response to abuse, there was an ongoing reluctance to talk about the abuse.

This may suggest a hierarchy of shame that may exist within society again implying an assumption of choice on the drinker's part regardless of other factors. Bartky (1991) has argued that women's default position in society is one of shame, yet some experiences, more than others, appear to be more shame inducing.

Nessa: I get more negative reaction wi' the drinking as opposed to the domestic abuse but I think that's because to them they are still brushing it under the carpet.....my family never speak about it, the abuse, never, it disnae get mentioned .

Val (support worker): Lots o' stigma about domestic abuse but there's lots of stigma when you've got alcohol involved.....

This perception of choice on the part of the women was a recurring sub-theme throughout the talk of both the Photovoice participants and the stakeholders which appeared to underpin judgemental attitudes. This may provide insight as to why

focus was seen to remain on the woman's behaviour rather than that of the abusive man.

Focus on the woman's behaviour : "It's no' our choice ...all focused on the woman's behaviour"

Across the discussions it was felt acutely that disproportionate attention was focused on women's behaviour; if and why she chooses to stay, if she drinks, how she mothers, how she behaves in public and how she maintains family relationships. A sense of injustice was articulated, particularly in relation to contact with formal services. This concern dominated the talk of the Photovoice participants as well as that of the stakeholders:

Val (support worker): You go to these professionals for help and within a week you've lost your kids, you've lost your home you've lost your independence...everything because you were in an abusive relationship....they see it as that's your choice, you choose to stay

Faith: It's no' our choice....all focused on the woman's behaviour

All of the women were mothers and raised concerns in the way that this focus on their behaviour primarily did so in the context of their responsibilities as mothers with little concern about the father's behaviour or responsibilities. This form of mother-blaming is considered so pervasive that all women experience it, but the context of domestic abuse exacerbates the chance that women are blamed for a 'failure to protect' on the grounds of their actions (Lapierre 2010). The irony of this disparity is highlighted in the extract below when it is the woman who presents as the one in need of assistance and support.

Val (support worker): from my experience in my job working with social work....if police come and there's domestic abuse it's very much mum that has to into parenting classes , mum that has to clean up her act....it's mum that has to stay away from him he's no involved in any core groups or case conferences.....all that power and all that strength is taken away from her ,strength in leaving, courage to report....it is just ripped away by all these professionals round the table.

Julie (researcher):.. and if alcohol is involved ...if mum is drinking?

Val (support worker): they dinnae get support...it's more like 'you chose to drink' they dinnae see it as an addiction....you are choosing to drink so your child...is neglected. They dinnae see 'why are you drinking?'it's totally - child removed,what's that gonna do for them?...leave them homeless, isolated, depressed...

As evidenced in the previous chapter, the women generally adopted full responsibility for their children in protecting them in the abusive context where the actions of the fathers were unpredictable and their parenting was unreliable. As mothers, all of the women felt they were at risk of judgement. All of them had talked of being criticised and put down on a regular basis, a key tactic of coercive control to undermine them in all aspects of their life. Men appeared to be particularly aware of the importance of the identity of motherhood to women, and the workings of the institution of motherhood, and were willing to exploit both. Any indication of alcohol use made women even more vulnerable to this form of substance use coercion by their partners, involving threats of, or actual reporting to, authorities. A professional draws upon her experience:

Stakeholder 9: Oh most certainly...and you know the perpetrator will feed into that.....: "I'll tell them you're drinking, I'll take the kids away from you" or " If you don't have sex with me in this way I will tell them you neglect the kids and they'll take them away"the use of children by perpetrators is a vital part of domestic abuse. I think a bit that again it's associated with the control stuff that's often hidden...(advocate)

What appears to make this possible is the assumption of mothers as fully and ultimately responsible for children. This is another example of a violation that is invisible in plain sight; we can see it, but because it is based on such gendered norms we fail to question it or see the coercive element to it.

Construction of the bad mother

All of the women demonstrated a sharp awareness of this type of threat that is only effective through knowledge by both parties of the workings on the system and

societal expectations of motherhood. As Sheila below articulates, being subject to the ongoing scrutiny of multiple reports reinforced the sense of self blame reported elsewhere in these findings. In this construction of the bad mother failing to protect her children, mothers are not only held responsible for exposing their children to their own experiences of abuse, they are implicitly held responsible for the man's behaviour.

Sheila: That was one of my worries, cos B did reinforce this....you'll lose the kids if you ever leave mebut what happened with H....it was all like "I seen my dad battering my mum".....etc....but I was getting so many reports (from social services) it was always about 'you've obviously done something wrong as a mother'. It was never against him....never about what have you done to your daughter?.... I was living there, I got made to feel that...it was obviously my fault.

Val (support worker): yeah that's how every woman is made to feel.

By understanding the importance of women's identities as mothers, men were seen to actively work at the construction of the bad mother in contrast to the good father knowing the power that this yields.

Shona:...and then they make you feel bad about what they're doing to us...and then...no just that...they break us down mentally. "Look at you you're a terrible mother, you shouldn't even have they bairns. You leave me, I'm going to take you to court, I'm going to take they bairns"

The addition of women's drinking to the situation appeared to provide a further tool that a man can draw upon to distract attention away from his behaviour. A number of the stakeholders drew upon their experiences to report the way that the man may reconstruct himself as the rational responsible partner when presenting to services. Equally powerful, and more concerning, was how this construction may also reframe how the woman herself is persuaded by the man's version of the situation to see him as her saviour, as seen in the extract below:

Stakeholder 8:....so just say their wives or partners were drinkers and then social work would get involved because of his abuse of her!but then his

back story is it's because she's a drinker and then all of a sudden it would be all about her!and he's now the carer (Oh...they're so stupid these people!) and em...so all the focus goes on her about her drinking and all the focus comes off him and his abuse and his violence and all that... if it wasn't for him, the kids wouldn't get to school and all that...if you believe that you believe anything!

Stakeholder 8: I remember one woman saying "Oh my partner's really helping me with my drinking " and one of the things he would do....if there was alcohol in the house, that he would buy! , he would make a big thing about it and then he would in front of the kids pour the alcohol down the sink or get the children to help him . "we're helping mummy..." ...then she'd be grateful to him ...and I'm appalled...and she's like "What's wrong there...he's helping me?"children involved pouring a bottle of vodka! So where did the alcohol come from....he bought it..."he's so open with the children."

I am like...are youse are off your head...even social workers etc....can you not see that that's really controlling?

A major concern that was expressed by multiple stakeholders was that the controlling aspects of this are not seen or understood by all of the services that may become involved. Tactics that involve shifting the focus away from men, especially if the woman appears compliant with the narrative, indicates a lack of knowledge about the complexity of men's tactics of coercive control that extends to the manipulation of professionals.

Furthermore, concern was expressed in relation to the way that abusive partners may use children in this shaming process. Each of the women who identified as heavy drinkers in the group discussions had experienced a version of this:

Shona: they turn the bairns on you, they sit them doon and tell them.....your mother's a bad mother. I mind he said to the bairn (and at this time I'd only touched grass. I hadnae played about wi' anything else ...I'd watched too many people die) but I mind him saying to the bairn..."Your ma's nothing but a junkie" and the bairn was 7! He would also sit the bairn doon and question him ..."who's she had in the hoose?"

Mary: I got that as well wi my laddies. R would make them look at me in the bed really steamin" drunkhe went "look, that's how your mother's been all her life, since the day I met her" , that wasn't true.

Shona: Aye...and because we'd be ashamed of whatever we had doneI mind once I had totally passed out and came to and he had to make the bairn's tea that night. and he was like "I'll be phoning the social workers, You're no fit to look after that bairn you've passed out...bla bla bla....I'm having to make his tea, I'm having to do this" He did f-all for him!

Using women's substance use in this way can be considered a particular form of maternal alienation (Morris 2009) that constitutes a range of tactics to undermine and destroy relationships between mothers and their children. But such tactics go further by deflecting responsibility for abuse from fathers to mothers, discrediting the women in the eyes of services that they may turn to for help, or even preventing them from seeking help for fear of sanctions. Undermining women's credibility in this way can be seen as a powerful tool of domination and is made possible by the web of entrapment created by the male abuser in what Morris (2009, p.415) describes as the "abusive household gender regime (AHGR)." It is the power of the abuser, in this regime, to define reality, to convincingly reframe the story, which makes such alienation possible.

These tactics also rely on women's own awareness that they should feel ashamed as mothers who have transgressed the image of 'good mother' through their use of alcohol in a negative way. As women had described fathers often absent from their children's lives, rarely taking a share of the parenting work, the irony and injustice of fathers selectively positioning themselves as the good and responsible parent was felt by most of the women.

For the women in this study who identified as having experienced problematic drinking, the impact of their drinking on their children was not ignored or denied. Each of them talked openly about living with self blame and shame from times when they recognised themselves as failing at mothering through their alcohol use:

Mary: It got to a stage with me as well I had to get up playing mother but 'kid-on' mother...I started locking myself in the bathroom drinking a bottle o' wine

and get the panel of the bath and hide the wine. I waslike the demon of drink...

Mary's identification as a 'kid-on mother', as she likens herself to a demon because of the drinking, implies a real sense of loss of control over her mothering. She constructs herself in clear opposition to a 'real mother', the implication being that 'real' mothers do not drink to excess. She implies she has lost either the right or ability to be considered a real mother. Mary went on to talk about how this alienation persisted: even as adults, her sons berated her and blamed her drinking for the abuse they all lived with. What is important here is the interaction between the patriarchal view of mothering and ideologies of appropriate behaviour for women (Lapierre 2010). This shaming and blaming is only possible because of the way that mothering is constructed in western societies, intersecting with attitudes to women and alcohol.

Faced with the conditions of coercive control, isolation, intimidation, and the burden of rules and regulations women clearly felt limited in their space for action in terms of mothering and this virtually sets them up to fail to meet society's standards of the good mother. One framework suggested to understand this is Beth Richie's notion of gender entrapment (Richie 1995, cited in Radford and Hester 2006, p.28) applied to the marginalisation of abused women as mothers due to unrealistic societal expectations of all mothers. Overburdening women by setting impossible standards and rules for household tasks and child care, make it impossible for women to succeed and leaves them open to the abuser shifting blame onto them for the abuse; mother blaming. Disparities in the expectations of mothers and fathers are clearly problematic. Mothers are expected to provide adequate emotionally attached fathers while societal expectations of fathers involvement in care remain minimal, leaving it up to the mother to negotiate his parenting role in an abusive situation where she has little or no power. Mothers are therefore seen as fully responsible while their space for action is severely diminished (Radford and Hester 2006).

One participant summarises an acute awareness of these expectations of women, alcohol and motherhood:

Shona:...if us as mums went out to the pub and had that drink...we were probably subconsciously or consciously aware of "I'm standing in a pub having a bevvie...they're all gonna be "Oh look at her, bad mum.....bairns are in the hoose...and she's oot" that's no how it worked...we were meant to be at home looking after our bairns.

Despite living in a more egalitarian society where women are perceived to be free to 'have it all', such expressions of traditional gender norms in relation to mothers dominated women's beliefs. It was clear that women had to be fully responsible where children were concerned, whereas men could be free of such judgement.

While none of the women in this study talked of experiencing having their children taken into care, there was talk of a breakdown in relationships with their children. One woman talked emotionally about losing contact with both her children and grandchildren until she had separated from her abusive partner and proved herself to have recovered from her alcohol dependency. There was no indication of whether the domestic abuse, or the alcohol dependency, or a combination of both, had caused the loss of contact or at what age this had happened, but there was an ongoing sense of being monitored by her, now adult, daughter with regards to her drinking. Yet, her photograph below captures a sense of freedom, specifically from violence but also from fear, and presents a positive hope for the future.

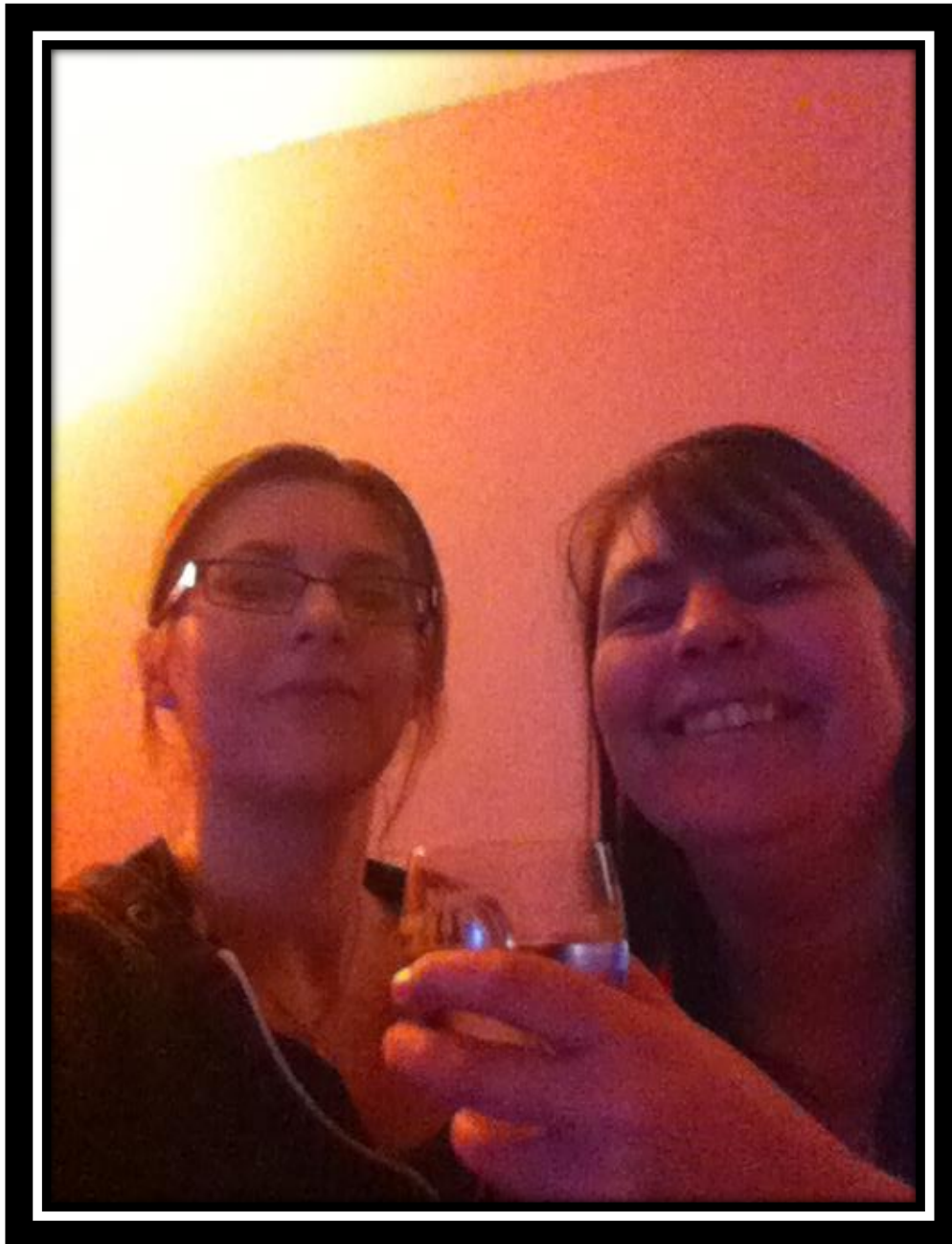


Photo 19: Forever

We raise our glass without the fear of violence.

Free to be mum and daughter at last.

Stakeholders drew upon their practice to reflect upon the impact of such losses on women. The experience of losing custody or access to children was seen as a detrimental situation fraught with shame and regret. This was considered by the professionals in this study as the ultimate and most damaging punishment for what is seen as failure as a mother, as reflected in their comments:

Stakeholder 4: The other thing that comes into it for women as well with the alcohol and through the alcohol...is the shame to the family and the women have pride....it is kind of difficult to think of the woman being proud if she's at her lowest ebb....but the women are proud. The stigma they bring....but shame is a good word as opposed to stigma is a good word that they use a lot...remorse, regret...of their life, regret of losing their children. (drug and alcohol support worker)

Stakeholder 2: I think it depends a lot on your background, there are some people who have grown up and their parents are alcoholics, drug use ...and that's just part of every day life and it's just another one of those things. There is less shame in admitting it as it feels more normal, it's just what everybody does.

Whereas for a lot of people, shame is a really powerful emotion....and you feel guilty especially for someone who has maybe not been able to take their kids with them.....or their alcoholism has been such a problem that their partner has managed to make sure they don't have access....and they've left or he's kicked them out and has kept the kids in order to punish her enough that she will come back because of the kids....that shame level is huge.

You are going to feel like you are an unfit mother....that's you broken and it's very hard to deal with thatsome women do manage it and others don't and end up in a continuing spiral of alcoholism. (freelance support worker)

Social Services – ‘don’t come on the radar!’

This focus on mothers and mothering was also prominent in the narratives of the stakeholders where there was a clear tension between different services and how they were perceived to respond to women who had experienced domestic abuse. However criticism of ‘social services’ was common to all of the stakeholders. Actions taken under the rationale of ‘child protection’ were problematised by a number of the stakeholders. This term related to the regulatory policies and practices in place in Scotland to protect the wellbeing of children. The concerns related to the way that women were treated when they ‘came on the radar’ of social services. It should be noted that the stakeholder interviews did not include anyone from the statutory

services commonly referred to as social services. Also, this critique clearly caused some discomfort and conflict within themselves as all comments carried the caveat that 'obviously child protection had to be the priority', yet all felt that actions taken under that heading had the potential to be more damaging than helpful to the women involved.

This idea of 'coming on the radar' encapsulates the idea of the scrutiny and ongoing surveillance that women were believed to be subjected to once social services gets involved. There appeared to be a view that that it was often better not to 'come on their radar'.

*Stakeholder 4: But there is a percentage of women and especially where there is drug and alcohol misuse, where social services have a child protection order on the case and this is the last stop shop. Driven by child protection, you must leave him and you have to clean up your drinking..."there's no need to drink, you've got a lovely wee boy there"...it's all very...yeah..The stories would curl your hair, some of the ones I've seen.
(women's refuge manager)*

*Stakeholder 8: Now sometimes sadly for some women that have become very vulnerableagencies come in, usually make it worse, rarely make it better I think....particularly child protection and all that. My experience of child protection does not make domestic abuse better...it makes women much more vulnerable and doesn't really think about the impact on children
(women's aid worker)*

There was a clear perception that when women 'come on the radar' they are subjected to a further level of control from services who often demand a level of compliance that may conflict with the woman's own wishes or the coercive controlling demands of her partner. Facing a collision of two compliance regimes may put women in positions that further compromise their safety rather than protect them. These demands were often attributed by stakeholders to a lack of a true understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly on the part of non-specialist services, especially the invisible and controlling aspects of abuse. A domestic abuse support worker articulates her frustration at this:

Stakeholder 7: Even before I got this role you would go to case conferences and it would be "you're making this choice, you're doing this, doing that..." and oh I'd crack up....but she's no doing that though, she's with a partner who is making her, who is coercing her into that...she kens if she doesn't do what she is told, there is going to be a consequence for her. So she's actually keeping the kids and herself more safe, although you dinnae see it like that...cos she kens the consequence if she doesn't....it's very frustrating! (domestic abuse support worker)

Such situations link to other dilemmas discussed in the previous two chapters where women are caught in the middle of controlling or dominant forces beyond their control facing conflicting imperatives. Women appear to be left to navigate institutional attitudes and controlling partners.

It was clear that often when women looked for help they often found judgement and a lack of understanding that had the potential to make them more vulnerable. For the women participants in the Photovoice groups the only place they did not feel judged was in the support provided by Women's Aid. Yet even that held an initial stigma for one participant who was reluctant to initially approach the service because of her own perceptions of the type of women who experience abuse and need the service.

Barbara : I did, but it took me a long time to go because I was embarrassed! I thought "I'm not going to women's aid ... (whispers)" I cannae go there!

Julie (researcher) : Why did you think that?

Barbara : I don't know if it's because through the years people have miscalled it and it had a stigma about it. Women's Aid was always like your alcoholic women...

Even though Barbara had self identified as having been alcohol dependent at that time, she still saw herself as different from the public perception of the typical abused woman she had just described. The stigma is suggested to be about Women's Aid but is clearly a reflection on the type of women that are abused:.

Barbara: Cos I didn't go for 6 months cos I was " I'm no going there...they'll be the downtrodden from Niddrie" ...it's the complete opposite. Don't get me wrong you've got them from down there as well.

A perception of women as being of a certain social demographic and category reflects common assumptions about abused women. Domestic abuse is commonly thought of as being a working class issue despite evidence to the contrary. Barbara was the only one to comment in such a way. Although it was likely that all of the women's narratives were infused with class assumptions, a class analysis was not the aim of the study and the data did not allow any conclusions to be drawn. But for Barbara, not wanting to be recognised as an abused woman was clearly combined with a form of 'othering', not seeing herself as fitting that image.

But attendance at Women's Aid challenges those perceptions and resistance:

Barbara: But they're women...they're just women...

Barbara's ultimate observation captures the overriding sense of injustice felt by the women in this study and how they thought they should be perceived: not as some special category to be labelled and marginalised, but just women. Such concerns are indicative of the power of the public story of domestic abuse and how it shapes even survivors' perceptions.

Drinking women are chaotic

Several stakeholder participants suggested that drinking women were often perceived as chaotic on the part of services. If women did not conform to services demands they were judged as uncooperative and difficult to deal with. This was believed to be particularly relevant where the abused woman women had alcohol problems. The concern was that such women were often referred to as 'chaotic', 'difficult to work with' or 'unreliable'. They were often perceived to be in 'self destruct spirals'. This term was used several times seeming to imply women out of control. One example used was the variance in policies around the admission to refuges of substance using women, but other explanations referenced a lack of understanding in the role that alcohol played in their lives.

Stakeholder 8: I think they (Women's Aid) don't cope with drinking women or drug using women very well...I think the other agencies dismiss domestic abuse as a drunk woman's chaotic lifestyle...almost like the choices that she makes are the consequences to her drinkingrather than the drinking as a consequence of her abuse.

Once again this perception was related to women's 'choices'.

This idea of being worthy of help was perceived to operate on two levels.

Stakeholder 9: if she has had engagement with services and has had a negative response she's likely to have internalised those messages. I think we do have a thing within our service system where we have a hierarchy of victims...if I can use that word or that phrase. If I'm polite and compliant, if I'm worthy seeming you know and I'm complying with whatever regime you as the service provider is offering me. Then that's ok. If I'm not nice in the way I ask for help because I'm angry or I'm distressed, or I'm drunk ...or whatever. Or if I'm not compliant with your service regime, I'm not seen as a good victim and I can be dismissed in a sense. (advocate)

This idea of being worthy was also closely connected to a belief that women could be perceived as a lost cause. Women could get trapped in the system if they required repeated support, particularly survivors who are drinking. They may be perceived as a lost cause, their failure to change being attributed to lifestyle choices. Not only could this limit the quality of help received it may be internalised by the individual woman who senses this act of abandonment. While this was not perceived as deliberate or even conscious on the part of the worker, it was considered extremely damaging.

Stakeholder 9:for victims that seem unable to help themselves , so they're stuck in that situation which many women who are drinking are, many women who experience domestic abuse are ...and many who experience both are stuck there...I think sometimes what our services do and people within the services . They start to go "oh that's their lifestyle, it's not going to change, it doesn't matter what we do, it's not going to change"..and then they start to back away, they start to, you know, come to a point where they're slightly less

prepared, don't follow up on things. So there will be something in the way that the professional presents that tells that woman that actually they've got no hope for me, and that can be internalised as well. I think that's a reality and it's not deliberate, it's not conscious necessarily from the worker, 'it's just the way it is....it's always been like that, everybody's tried...all of the services have been involved, nothing changes" I think that's a huge issue, a huge issue! ..and a stigmatising issue....(advocate)

Even support staff experienced challenges reflecting this attitude that such women are not worthy of help. Again the belief in substance using women as being responsible for their situation is constructed to the extent that supporting them encouraged such behaviour.

Stakeholder 3: Oh you hear it all the time. People say to me, "why do you work there? Why are you supporting these women? It's their own fault they shouldn't be getting support if they're using or drinking. Why should you encourage and help women, taxi them about...and things?"

I saybecause no one else has faith in them. I will go to their first appointments at substance misuse clinicsbecause they've got no confidence or self esteem, because it's been knocked out of them....literally! (freelance support worker)

While a number of professionals believed that alcohol made women more vulnerable others believed that the judgements in general had a more damaging effect.

Stakeholder 7: The worst thing as well, and that's what the general public dinnae realise is because...you are actually making that woman more vulnerable because of your judgement of her...do you know what I mean. ? It's no about...'oh she's drunk" ...well, why is she drunk? Nobody's interested in why that woman's having a drink at twelve o'clock in the afternoon...or 9 o'clock in the morning. They are just judging them. (Women's Aid support worker)

Others reflected this attitude of unworthiness as existing at a macro level, where people in authority are only interested in women's lives when they are dictating what

they should be doing, regarding their health or lifestyle, or that the government wishes to turn a blind eye to such social problems regarding women.

Stakeholder 2: I've always worked in some sort of social care, homelessness, poverty....this is something that affects everybody's lives, you will know somebody that's been affected by domestic abuse. The reason a lot of people don't know anything about it because basically the government just wishes it would just bugger off because these people are not worth it. If they all just buggered off we'd not have these social problems.... (freelance support worker)

Such beliefs and attitudes may reflect disenchantment with the current neoliberal political climate in the UK that has perpetuated a division between the deserving and undeserving, as blame for inequality is directed at individuals, rather than structural constraints. In this individualistic society women would be expected to be responsible for their own safety.

Unsurprisingly, most professionals considered their own services to be non-judgmental.

Stakeholder 1 - We don't judge at all, there is no ...er...you can't they are in that situation and you just have to try and help it...but..I do think there is a sense of shame and embarrassment. (specialist domestic violence police officer)

For some, like the police, the perception of them being judgmental lay in the required investigative nature of their questioning. But another takes a broader view suggesting a problem with our own biases as individuals, or at a minimum a lack of awareness of those. We are all products of society with no one standing outside of it and carry our own biases without being aware of them.

Stakeholder 9: Yes I do think that's a problem... professionals are often unaware of their prejudice against women drinkers so their judgements are invisible to them...(advocate)

These sub-themes relating to an overt focus on the woman's behaviour by services and varied levels of understanding connect to a broader concern that society in general fails to understand domestic abuse and the complications of the duality of alcohol and abuse.

Failing to see the big picture

All of the women in the study felt the burden of judgement and stigma from outside sources, whether it related to them being labelled as a domestic abuse victim, a woman who had alcohol issues, or both. Collectively they agreed that a lack of understanding of domestic abuse was at the core of this, and the solution was framed by them as a need for others in society to see the big picture.

Val (support worker): I think it's how people perceive you drinking alcohol ...so they make an assumption that you are just a jakey and a waste of space. They dinnae take into account that there may be domestic abuse involved in it.

Faith: Other side tae it is just because they drink alcohol does not mean that that is an excuse for domestic abuse.

Public judgments were collectively believed to be closely tied to women's apparent choice to stay in the relationship. A powerful victim blaming discourse appeared to be at the core of this problem.

Val (support worker) : I think you can become very embarrassed, very embarrassed...cos that's how society makes you feel that you should be ashamed and embarrassed. They think "why did you no just get oot!?"

The solution to increased understandings in public attitudes in general appeared to lie in a raising awareness through education. Women suggested that education on domestic abuse should start in schools.

Society disapproves

Yet, the need to look beyond the obvious came through in a discussion based around a small number of stock photos I had brought along to the final session to explore women's responses to media representations of women and alcohol. The stock picture of an apparently drunk young woman lying across a bench in a street, one is regularly published in relation to young women's drinking stories, provoked a strong reaction from the group. This image has been so repeatedly used in media reports on women's drinking that it is well known as 'bench girl'.

Val (support worker) :.....I think there should be a campaign to look at the bigger picture.....not see a girl and think she's a drunken whore....got to look at the bigger picture, that's where society lacks ...can be really judgmental of peoplewho would go and help her (the girl in the picture)

Again the women highlighted their awareness of the connections between alcohol and victim blaming in cases of sexual assault. *"if that wee girl got raped and somebody took that photo and took it to court they'd say ...well she was up for it"* (Val).

Photos representing public health campaigns in the UK that specifically target women who drink, through the impact of alcohol on their looks, triggered a shocked reaction and disbelief that they could be real. The Drink Like a Man campaign, was launched by Drug and Alcohol Services London in 2008 (Wade 2009). The Drinking Mirror App. (mobile device application), launched by the Scottish Government in the same year, was marketed exclusively to women (Toor 2013). This in turn generated a critical discussion around the failure of other campaigns, specifically around domestic abuse, to reflect the reality of women's experiences. The exception to this was:

Sheila: .the campaign with Keira Knightly taken off the air as too graphic....it was really good

Val (support worker): How is that too graphic yet we can have images of war?

The CUT campaign created by Women's Aid was banned from being shown even after the British television watershed as it was considered too violent (Women's Aid

2009). An edited version had to be created for television in order to meet the advertising standards. Charities working to combat domestic violence branded the decision by Clearcast, the advertising approval body, "pathetic", arguing that, in banning the advert, it was shielding the public from the reality of domestic violence (Shields 2009).

The lack of understanding most concerning to the participants, based on their own experience, was related to a number of the more general statutory services that women came up against in their attempts to rebuild their lives.

Val (support worker): So we're talking about council, GPs social workers, dentists, police, anybody at all that has any contact....it's widespread ...you cannae pin it down to 'jenny in the market'.

Faith: Personally I would like to see everybody that gets involved with a woman that has been through domestic abuse getting some kind of training ...and I'm talking about....you know you go to the council to try and get somewhere to live...its very much frowned upon that you are fleeing domestic violence

It was felt that ignorance or judgment not only stigmatises women but may put them in danger. A number of examples were discussed where services that women had engaged with when leaving domestic abuse, such as housing, local authority departments, lawyers or government employment centres were thought to have been negligent with information that revealed aspects of safety planning.

Chapter Summary

Women survivors of domestic abuse in this study experienced a powerful sense of negative judgment from multiple sources at all levels of society. They reported feeling demonised and labelled as deviant and strongly resisted the injustice of this construction. They expressed this repeatedly as a need to be understood as normal women who had experienced events beyond their control.

However, the attitudes they faced tended towards a victim blaming discourse implying a sense of responsibility and choice on their part. This implication of choice was more strongly reflected in the judgments experienced by survivors who used alcohol often leading to a categorisation of some women not being worthy of help. Drinking women who came on the radar of services were sometimes perceived as chaotic or out of control.

All women and most of the stakeholders emphasised how being a mother exposed women to additional risks of coercion and shaming by both abusive partners and some services. The focus of services on the woman's behaviour in this context was considered to be unjust, redirecting attention away from abusive men. Victim blaming discourses were reinforced by processes of 'mother blaming' facilitated by high expectations of mothers and minimal expectations of fathers in society. Equal concern was directed at the lack of understanding in non-specialist services of the dynamics and controlling nature of domestic abuse in particular the attempts of men to discredit their partners to services.

Overall it was clear that a lack of understanding of domestic abuse in general, and women's alcohol in this context, needs to be addressed at all levels of society to reduce the levels of shame and stigma experienced by survivors.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol use by not only looking at where alcohol use has been defined as abusive or problematic, but by looking at the part played by alcohol in the everyday lives of abused women. Inclusion of a perspective that regards women's drinking as normal and pleasurable, a rational choice within the context of their particular material and social situations, was vital to the research. Therefore, it was essential to study women's alcohol use as a constructive and autonomous response to their lives as they balanced multiple risks against each other, a particularly important consideration in relation to domestic abuse where autonomy may be severely compromised. A qualitative account was used, taking a gendered approach to the realities of women's use of alcohol. Locating women's drinking within the context of their everyday lives enabled an examination of how these experiences were shaped by a gender differentiated society; how the gendered construction of alcohol use impacted upon their lived experience.

The aim of the research was addressed by investigating the following research questions:

- How do women negotiate their alcohol use during and beyond their experiences of domestic abuse?
- What narratives do women construct in relation to their alcohol use in the context of experiencing domestic abuse?
- What can Feminist Participatory Action Research contribute to understanding the intersection of alcohol and domestic abuse and the generation of positive change from a survivor's perspective?

Surviving coercive control

A detailed understanding of the context of the women's lives, during the period they identified as being in an abusive relationship, was critical to comprehending how

women negotiated their own alcohol use. Through their images and dialogue the women painted a complex picture that included men's drinking and the interrelated accounts men gave in relation to abuse. While the main aim of the research was to explore women's own alcohol use it was clearly important to the women to explore men's own drinking as a part of the wider context in which they lived.

All of the women in this study described experiencing regular physical violence and reported a range of other abuses, such as psychological, emotional, sexual abuse, financial abuse, acts of degradation and surveillance. These were recognised by them as components of a range of tactics to exercise power and control. Once established, the threat of violence operated to retain a state of fear that aimed to make them compliant to their partner's demands focused around their performance as wives, women and mothers. In painting this picture all of the women were describing the complexity and constraints of their living conditions. Contemporary feminist work has highlighted the importance of power and control in men's abusive behaviours (Pence and Paymar 1993, Dobash and Dobash 2004) and contemporary feminist theories of domestic abuse have highlighted the need to distinguish between types of physical violence enacted as part of domestic abuse in order to understand its purpose. Johnson (2008) suggests that once violence is experienced it is important to know if it was enacted in a general context of power and control. Drawing upon Johnson's (2008) typology work to distinguish types of violent behaviour indicated that the women in this study were describing acts of intimate terrorism by their partner: an intimate terrorist is violent and highly controlling and uses violence in combination with a variety of other tactics to exert coercive control over his partner. The power of this combination lies in the terror induced in the woman: once violence has been used by the male partner, all his other controlling acts take on the threat of violence. Indeed, the findings of this study where all of the women described living in a state of fear and hypervigilance due to the unpredictable nature of their partner's rules and regulations, further supports experiences of intimate terrorism. In an alternative model of Johnson's (2008) situational couple violence, the violence arises out of relationship conflict and may be minor or chronic. In both cases the specific incidents of violence may look the same, but Johnson stresses the difference is in the general power and control dynamic of the relationship, not in the nature of any one assault, making coercive control the key to

understanding the difference. In this way, violence is contingent; violence acted as punishment for a failure to comply with his demands was a dimension that clearly stood out in the women's accounts. The work of Johnson (2008) and Stark (2007) also highlights how the reason for the violence is not always made clear as it may appear to come out of the blue, may be constructed by the abusive partner as a loss of control, or be blamed on other factors such as drinking. Indeed, the women in this study highlighted the contradictory nature of the violent behaviour as they strived to meet the demands of their partners. This finding supports previous feminist work that suggests much of what women experience are a constellation of abuses, many invisible, that aim to exert power and control over women in intimate relationships. The importance of making this typology distinction in this study is to demonstrate the need to shift attention away from only considering physical violence as being what constitutes domestic abuse.

This is particularly critical in researching alcohol's presence in the abusive relationship, as many previous studies have remained focused on the physical violence in looking for causal explanations (Klostermann and Fals-Stewart 2005, Foran and O'Leary 2008, Leonard and Quigley 1999) or exploring women's views on attributions of blame (Galvani 2010b). This shift in focus is in no way intended to undermine the importance of the physical abuse, quite the opposite, the aim is to illustrate the part it plays in a broader constellation of abuses that aim to entrap women in personal life (Stark 2007).

It is using Stark's (2007) framework of coercive control that allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the everyday lived experience of the women in this study and how these conditions may have influenced their relationship with alcohol. The women described living under regimes of rules and regulations dictated by their partners, underpinned by an overriding message that "it was always his way or the high way". Demands that focused around meals, housework, childcare and sex dominated the women's accounts and were understood to be deliberately targeting their performance as women, wives and mothers. The majority of the women also negatively experienced a sense of men's entitlement and ownership, in parallel with their own conflicted sense of their duty as wives or intimate partners. Structural feminist theory argues that it is the gender order of patriarchal societies that have led

to a sense of ownership and entitlement to male privilege and control over women's lives (Dobash and Dobash 1998) and that such expectations underpin the use of violence by men in intimate relationships when their needs, stated or unstated, are not being met (Anderson and Umberson 2001).

The highly gendered nature of this micro-regulation of minute aspects of the woman's life has been highlighted in Stark's (2007) framework of coercive control and Connell's (2009) concept of local gender regimes. The gender regime of the domestic unit is considered a site of power for men, with default roles that favour hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. What is critical here is an understanding of emphasised femininity as a form that is oriented to accommodating the interests of men through compliance (Connell 2009). This focus on women's domestic activities and duties may be at odds with what we may consider a more egalitarian society. In this study it created internal conflict as some women clearly struggled to identify themselves with what they saw as women's work, yet equally blamed themselves for not being 'feminine' enough when they appeared to fail. However, Stark (2007, p. 213) draws attention to its larger role in ".....solidifying a woman's generic obedience to male authority: her 'doing femininity' in ways that accord with his stereotype of her gender role allows him to 'do masculinity' as he imagines it should or must be done". The effectiveness of the micro-regulation of how women 'do gender' also appears to lie in its hidden or invisible nature, as suggested in previous work (Williamson 2010), leading women in this study to resist disclosure for fear of not being believed. Women also found such attacks on their feminine identity damaging to their sense of self, leading to self-blame for the abuse. However, this fear of failure in femininity also caused women to strive to be perfect, but with the rules and regulations constantly changing, they could 'never do right for doing wrong' and were effectively set up to fail. Women felt trapped by this loss of control leading to a diminished sense of autonomy over their everyday lives. These findings mirror the broader aim of coercive control outlined by Stark (2007), to entrap women in personal life, which he frames as a liberty crime.

Managing through the madness: unpredictability, ambiguity and uncertainty

Women felt trapped by many aspects of their lived experience, both physically and psychologically. Stark (2007) suggests that we examine the nature of domination by

focusing on the cage, not the incidents of abuse. This concept of the cage with bars that imprison, either physically or psychologically, is a useful theoretical tool in highlighting the way that women experience the complex web of control and often chaotic and contradictory nature of the abuser's rules (Stark 2007; Williamson 2010). The women in this study were effectively constructing images, through words and photographs, of the cage that each had experienced. Narratives of being home, behind closed doors, watching, waiting in isolation and in a state of hypervigilance dominated their stories. The hidden and private nature of abuse was a major concern and presented challenges in understanding and managing their situation. The notion of 'behind closed doors' was an important one for the participants which helped highlight both the private way in which they experienced abuse, the pressure to maintain the secret and the isolation and entrapment they felt. Isolation is one of the key tactics of coercive control that serves these particular purposes (Stark 2007). Yet, this also resonates, on another level, with ongoing feminist work which challenges the public story of domestic abuse as a private problem and reframes it as a societal, political problem, part of the wider continuum of violence against women (Kelly 1988).

Unpredictability

The unpredictable and unstable nature of living with domestic abuse appeared to make it challenging for women to attempt to manage their safety both physically and psychologically. While demonstrations of masculinity by male partners, setting the rules and administering punishment, dominated the women's stories, these were interwoven with intermittent and contradictory behaviours of neediness and child-like behaviour following acts of abuse. Such behaviour created conflicting feelings for the women. Even though they were recognised as men's attempts to excuse their behaviour and often redirect blame to other factors, such as alcohol addiction or the women's own behaviour, they were difficult to deal with as the women found themselves in paradoxical situations of caring and tending to the feelings of the man who had just beaten them.

This finding resonates with a body of work that has highlighted the expectation for women to be carers and prioritise the emotional needs of others above their own (Hochschild 1979; Duncombe and Marsden 1995; Lloyd and Emmery 2000) and in

particular Donovan and Hester's (2014) study of how practices of love and relationship rules operate in abusive relationships. Abusive partners were found to be extremely eloquent in providing rationales for their behaviour, displaying vulnerability that elicited sympathy, care and emotion work in the victim, based on feelings of love, loyalty and duty that are expectations of intimate relationships. Donovan and Hester (2014) argue that abusive partners here are enacting both masculinity and femininity that leads to confusion, in order to manipulate and reinforce beliefs that women are responsible for looking after the relationship, but also leading them to believe they can fix the problem, or even take the blame for abuse, and therefore giving them a temporary, false, sense of power. As these rules are seen to be characteristic of the gender norms of heterosexual love, women may see this as a normal enactment of masculinity in men and femininity in women that may keep women from recognising abuse. Donovan and Hester (2014) therefore suggest that practices of love operate to sustain the relationship rules, but that they also challenge the public story of domestic abuse that depends upon essentialist notions of binaries of men as strong and women as weak. On the basis that the public story of domestic abuse is too simplistic in the way it depicts gendered behaviours, I would argue that this study supports this position.

However, men's displays of neediness that appear to challenge the abuser as strong may just be that; appearances. The evidence from this study suggests men were deliberately constructing themselves as vulnerable and in need of care at strategic points in order to deflect responsibility, while simultaneously manipulating women's identity as carers in the relationship. Women appeared to be aware of this fact, yet they struggled with the paradoxical nature of the situation. Studies of male perpetrator's accounts (Hearn 1998; Cavanagh et al. 2001) have found this behaviour to be part of a range of tactics men used to mitigate their own culpability. Equally, Herman (1992) in her work on trauma experienced by female domestic abuse victims identified such behaviour as part of a reconciliation phase that is undertaken to break down a woman's psychological resistance to his abuse, before reasserting his power once more. Findings from this study also suggest that such dramatic changes in behaviour are part of tactic of maintaining unpredictability that contributes to an ongoing deliberate destabilising effect.

This ongoing unpredictability and ambiguity in the relationship was a key feature of women's experiences of abuse that required a high level of vigilance. The constantly shifting boundaries of the abusive partner's rules, demands and behaviours created major challenges for women in this study as have been highlighted by others and are understood to be a deliberate tactic of coercive control (Stark 2007; Williamson 2010). Although the aim of the study was to examine women's relationship with alcohol, men's drinking was a dominant feature in the lives of all but one of the women, whose partner did not drink at all. Men's drinking appeared to be an aspect of behaviour that served to exacerbate the need for a state of vigilance. In the majority of the women's views, drinking appeared to make men more unpredictable but in a world where unpredictability was the norm. One previous study (Hutchison 1999), examining reports to police, suggested that the unpredictability that accompanies drunkenness may escalate a victim's fear and may make this a powerful weapon for men who seek to dominate women. To recognise this aspect of experience is not to suggest direct causality. The same men that were unpredictable through drink were described as being equally unpredictable and contradictory in their behaviour when sober, as was the one partner who did not drink. However, to understand men's drinking in this way does not fail to recognise the materially disruptive or harmful nature a heavy drinking male partner had in the lives of the women through lost sleep, anxiety and episodes of public embarrassment.

An important finding that emerged across the different themes and narratives was the extent to which women had to manage this chaotic, unpredictable, fearful situation alone. Women reported feeling isolated, sometimes abandoned by family members and often appeared friendless. Deliberately isolating partners is a key tactic of coercive control (Stark 2007). The purposeful and insidious nature of isolation tactics were often recognised by the women only in hindsight after leaving the relationship. The sense of isolation and entrapment made it difficult for women to make sense of what was happening to them.

The need for vigilance

What is more important here is how control, isolation and intimidation create a climate of chronic fear and a state of hypervigilance that serves to entrap women. Always needing to be 'on' was a dominant part of women's stories that helped

capture the sense of ongoing fear and tension experienced on a daily basis. This was often framed in terms of waiting for their partners to come home, watching for his reaction to their performance of tasks, or anticipating the next abusive act. But the need to be vigilant permeated women's experiences and featured significantly in relation to their decisions around alcohol consumption and disclosure of abuse, discussed later in this chapter.

Multiple authors recognising the coercive and controlling nature of abuse as intimate terrorism have drawn useful parallels with experience of other forms of constraints such as prisoners of war (POW) and hostage taking (Herman 1992; Stark 2007; Johnson 2008; Pain 2012), suggesting that abused women are held hostages in their own home. In her study of abused women in Scotland, Pain (2012) highlighted how fear operates not just as a by-product of abuse but as a key element that sustains it. However, the findings suggest that a need for vigilance extended beyond the immediate threat of their abuser. Women expressed awareness of having to be vigilant to ideals of femininity in public drinking spaces and in particular in dealings with services in relation to their ability to be good mothers. In this way their femininity was under constant scrutiny not only by their partners but in the broader social context.

Making sense of abuse – “It’s different when you are in it”

The need for women to make sense of their experiences and the difficulties involved in doing so, stood out as an important finding in this study. This was an ongoing situation that did not end when partners separated. A critical distinction was made by the women between how they may have understood what was happening at the time and how they understood their experiences on later reflection, although some tensions between the two points were evident. Living under a regime of coercive control constrained their access to sources of information and support. Discourses that are available at any moment in cultural life constrain the options open to women who need to make sense of threats and acts of violence and control (Lim et al. 2015). This was evident as women talked of drawing upon a conflicting set of understandings in trying to find coherence. For example, in terms of managing men's drinking in relation to the abusive relationship women admitted how they had drawn upon the common, and readily available, 'blame the drink' discourse as a survival

mechanism some of the time, when 'in the situation'. Blaming the power of the substance to excuse his behaviour, was easier than facing the reality that the man they were with was choosing to abuse them and was really that 'bad'. On reflection, the women understood things differently. The enduring power of this discourse was reflected in the way that one woman still struggled to accept this by indirectly endorsing a belief that 'drink destroys', still validating the belief in the power of the substance. Findings reported by Galvani (2006), as she explored women's views on blame attributable to alcohol, made the distinction between blame and explanations, where blame apportions responsibility. Alcohol was found to play a key role but was generally not directly blamed for men's behaviour, as men were seen as responsible in choosing to drink and to be abusive, leading to a theory of responsible disinhibition. However, Galvani (2006) also showed that this acceptance that their partner had chosen to be abusive was a 'last resort explanation', only used when other explanations had been exhausted.

This struggle is also congruent with Berns and Schweingruber's (2007) work that argued that victims find it harder to understand a social problem when they are 'in it' as they are faced with a wider range of narratives than non-victims who primarily relate to the simple narratives supplied in the media. Victims have to harmonise a narrative of their self with the social problem, often finding their own experiences at odds with the public story, sometimes making their narratives appear more complex and confusing. But equally, being exposed to institutional narratives through expert help does not mean that victims accept these explanations, as has been seen in the current study. These findings are useful as they highlight an important process of learning, of 'coming to understand' once they are out of their immediate situation. As the women in the current study accessed services they had the opportunity to interpret their experiences through others. In so doing, they appeared to gain a different perspective by being exposed to institutional narratives which they chose to accept or resist.

However, women were also exposed to their male partners' explanations, excuses and, in the absence of other sources of support, his definition of reality. How women come to understand their experiences has been found to be impacted by how men define, and account for, their own abusive behaviour in studies of male perpetrator's

accounts and women's responses to them (Hearn 1998; Cavanagh et al. 2001). But the power held by men to impose "definitional hegemony" (Lempert 1996, p.286) in reframing their interpretations, introduced ambiguity (Towns and Adams 2015). Men making their version of reality the common sense one is a major and damaging tactic of the technology of coercive control. This power to define, as indicated in the relationship rules (Donovan and Hester 2014), makes the abuser's authoritative voice a compelling force, as it regularly reintroduces fear and doubt about who is to blame for the abuse, or whether it is abuse at all. The potential for damage as reported in Pain's (2012) study lies in leaving the woman in a state of doublethink: a conflicted state of holding contradictory thoughts and beliefs in her head at one time (Herman 1992; Pain 2012). Similar to Pain's participants, women in the current study experienced this dissonance between knowing the abuse was wrong but finding themselves ignoring it, normalising it, taking the blame, or framing it as something they could fix. For some women, this dissonance manifested as shame or self-blame, as they saw their self identity founded in being an independent woman yet had 'allowed themselves' to be controlled by their partner. Although this state of doublethink has been seen as a human survival strategy for difficult situations it is also linked to leaving women feeling that they are going crazy (Herman 1992; Pain 2012). With the abusive partner defining his own version of reality that is ever changing and destabilising, with him in control of the boundaries, negotiating this unreality has been found to be fear inducing while at the same time paralysing for women (Williamson 2010). Such evidence and explanations support the women in this study feeling like they were 'living in the madness' leaving them to sometimes doubt their sanity. Even after separation men played 'head games' with the women by breaking into the home, leaving evidence and then denying it. These findings suggest that not only do women suffer a limited space for action they also experience what I will call a limited 'space for understanding'. Many of the factors that make it difficult for women to make sense of their experiences appear to be deliberate tactics of control. This is an important finding because how women come to understand their experiences may influence how they respond and what they perceive their options to be.

Resistance is always possible

Despite the difficulties women faced in making sense of their experiences they were not passive victims. They found strategies of resistance that both increased their safety (hiding knives, hiding themselves), if only temporarily, but were simultaneously risky. Acts of drugging their drinking male partners with sleeping pills to prevent further violence were high risk examples of a subversive form of sabotage (Scott 1985) revealed in this study. These had the potential for serious consequences, should they be discovered. Women using alcohol to find the 'courage' to fight back was also blatantly risky, with women usually coming off worse. Alternatively, keeping drinking a secret from their partner and finally disclosing it in a challenging way revealed a sense of power. All of these tactics of resistance were clearly acts that women felt compelled to do to reclaim some sense of control, despite the consequences. The importance of the concepts of agency, resistance and resilience is well documented and theorised in the feminist domestic abuse literature. This work not only highlights the need for women to attempt to regain some small vestiges of control, it is also critical in challenging the pervasive victimisation narrative (Kelly 1988; Johnson 2000; Stark 2007; Pain 2012). These particular resistant acts relating to alcohol highlight the way that the women found space for agency within this context, but also reveal the risks that women were willing to take to protect themselves and their children, despite the potential for severe consequences. Of equal significance was the way that women managed their situations alone, largely without any external help.

To drink or not to drink?

The discussion so far has highlighted the complex, constrained and unpredictable living conditions faced by the women in this study living in the context of intimate terrorism and experiencing coercive control. I now turn to examine how living under such regimes impacted women's decisions around their own use of alcohol. Women's experiences in relation to their own drinking 'choices' were framed by narratives that took the form of dilemmas between conflicting forces: safety, autonomy, compliance, resistance, pleasure and responsibility. Women's stories reflected a sense of being trapped by inevitable outcomes of either the ongoing torment of abuse or the 'demon drink', in some cases experiencing one in a bid to

escape the other. Either way they felt they ended up in hell. This also captures the ongoing sense of women not being able to do anything right.

Women's decisions about their own use of alcohol, living under these conditions, were fraught with risk. Living within the context of domestic abuse the idea of choice is a fragile one. This study had specifically aimed to move away from a clinical and pathological approach argued to be a dominant trend in previous research into women's alcohol use (Ettorre 1992). In doing so, it included studying women's alcohol use as a constructive and autonomous response to their lives as they balanced risks against each other (Waterson 2000). Research from other studies into domestic abuse and the findings discussed earlier in this chapter made it clear that autonomy was severely constrained. Previous writers have described this as women operating within a limited space for action (Stark 2007; Kelly et al. 2014). The risks to be navigated were more extensive than those experienced by other women not experiencing coercive control and violence. What was also clear was that all 'choices' around alcohol had to be made with the reaction or needs of the abusive partner in mind.

Choosing abstinence or moderation was repeatedly constructed as a safety choice closely associated with an ongoing need for hypervigilance; a need to retain some level of control in the face of danger and to retain the ability to respond to the next threat. To look beyond this explanation is not to doubt its truth or fail to treat the women's narratives with dignity but to consider what else may be going on. Not drinking was not presented as something problematic, although commentators have suggested that in the Scottish drinking cultural context drinking is such a part of the way of life that stigma may be attached to abstinence (Bromley and Ormston 2005). However, this does not appear to equally apply to women as women are still expected to be models of moderation where alcohol is concerned as evidenced in other feminist work (Ettorre 1997; Waterson 2000; Day et al. 2004; Mcerlain 2015). It seemed important to some of the women to take up what Foucault (1972) describes as subject positions of abstinence or moderation. In doing so they may not just be describing their drinking choices, but also 'doing gender' within the group discussions, conforming to a discourse of normative or emphasised femininity, in line with the constraints of coercive control. It is important to note that such positions

appeared to be fluid as women's narratives included tales of experimenting with different levels of drinking at different points in the abusive relationships, as well as different stages in life. As very little work has examined women's drinking in the context of domestic abuse the need for abstinence has had little attention, although Galvani (2006) did also note women using abstinence to maximise their control of their partner's violence.

When women did 'choose' to drink within this context of domestic abuse they faced many conflicting pressures. They lived in constant fear of their partner's reactions, often unpredictable and contradictory. Additionally, they were aware of the ideals of appropriate femininity, so feared being judged by others, including services. It was clear that, barred from self determination, the 'choices' made around alcohol were not choices freely made; women rarely acted on the basis of their own preference as they were always vigilant to the needs and demands of their partners as well as those of wider society. Male partners used a range of coercion and force to persuade women to drink, to drink more than they wanted, or to drink with them. Being repeatedly physically held down and forced to drink, as described by one woman, was a particularly brutal tactic. In a continuum of tactics of control, verbal intimidation around their roles as good enough wives or partners was used to coerce them into drinking situations, but equally when they did drink, women reported being accused of sexual infidelity, being bad mothers and deserving of abuse. Compliance with force or persuasion was also constructed by the women at times as a safety choice because of the fear of the consequences of non-compliance.

Little research has been undertaken to investigate the multiple and often invisible ways that substance use coercion operates, and the range of tactics deployed. The findings in this study add to a limited body of knowledge of how and when such tactics are used, and how they make drinking within the context of coercive control a risky 'choice' for women. As with other tactics of control, they may be hidden in plain sight by the normality of a couple out drinking together or a man presenting as a good and caring father. The research published by Warshaw et al. (2014) usefully asked about both substance use coercion and mental health coercion from the same population. Evidence of both was found in this study, as captured by women's reports of attempts to make them feel crazy and their collective narrative of 'living in

the madness'. The subtle and insidious nature of both of these sets of tactics adds to the perpetrators toolkit of tactics that are invisible, leaving women with no voice to articulate them for fear of not being believed. Warshaw et al. (2014) suggested that it is the stigma attached to both women's alcohol use and mental health issues that delivers the power into the hands of the perpetrator. The concepts of substance use coercion and mental health coercion warrant further investigation within the context of domestic abuse, in particular the subtle and complex ways they operate.

Women in this study were rarely directly prohibited by their partners from drinking. Control over their autonomy in this area was asserted by a variety of indirect means. Financial control was an effective tactic, while drawing upon traditional values of marriage made one man's decision to stop attending 'couple' social outings a powerful constraint, knowing his wife would not go alone. As women attempted to create moments of autonomy by venturing out alone, abusive partners launched what Stark (2007, pp. 217) calls "search and destroy missions", often culminating in scenes of public verbal abuse from their partners; a form of public shaming leaving them feeling embarrassed by their partner's behaviour.

Even when women made it into public drinking spaces there were powerful reminders of the power of men to keep them in their proper place by means of segregation or abuse. The problem of policing women's behaviour in public drinking spaces has a long history (Hey 1986) but persists today (Valentine et al. 2007) and was still very visible in some of the traditional pubs and clubs attended by the participants in their local area. What concerned the women were the displays of hegemonic masculinity through demonstrations of entitlement and ownership of space being enacted most strongly by younger men who appeared to treat women as 'second class citizens'. This backlash experienced with respect to changing club rules to make women equal members is symbolic of the broader experiences in society when the gender order is challenged (Plant 1997). In contrast to traditional pubs or clubs, one woman in the study opted for gay drinking spaces as a place of safety from her partner and such choices have been highlighted by Skeggs (1999, 2005) as a not uncommon way to avoid the threat of male violence and the constant male gaze. What is also significant here is how, what Stark (2007, pp.232) calls "the dance of resistance and control", extends into public drinking spaces.

Hey (1986) has suggested that just because women are present in bars does not necessarily mean they are welcome. Much of the previous research into women in public drinking spaces has focused on young people, and the feminisation of the night-time economy, highlighting the continued competing discourses that create dilemmas for them in terms of their assumed freedoms and the risks to their femininity (Measham 2002; Day et al. 2004; Brooks 2008; Griffin et al. 2013). Contemporary bar designs attracting young professionals may be more gender balanced (Bancroft 2009), but despite claims of feminisation they are still highly gendered and heterosexualised spaces (Nicholls 2016), where women face risks to their safety and are still subject to informal social control through norms of appropriate femininity and respectability (Brooks 2008). Women in the current study showed awareness of the double standards discourse that applied to women around drinking in public spaces and particularly women who were visibly drunk but tended to associate these dilemmas more directly with young people drinking, often mirroring the media attention directed towards young women and alcohol. However, it would appear that there are few 'safe spaces' for women to escape the abusive relationship if they want to participate in the Scottish drinking culture.

A number of the women had concerns about the normalisation of drinking invading family life, both in reality and media representations. Concern was expressed about children being exposed to heavily drinking men as a result of the blending of family eating and drinking spaces promoted by the alcohol industry. This may represent another example of what Skeggs (2005, p.10) described as "unremitting masculinity" in public drinking spaces. The ubiquitous presence of alcohol in all aspects of Scottish life family celebrations, funerals, rewards at work, and the effect this may have on family life, also worried them. Gilchrist et al. (2014) also observed an acceptance of alcohol misuse as normal in a Scottish context; alcohol was considered a part of everyday experience. This may be worthy of note in the broader social context of the Scottish Government's attempts to bring about cultural change through a range of measures, including legislative changes related to licencing, alcohol sales, advertising and tackling public violence (Scottish Government 2009). It is worth noting that the group appeared to be divided in respect of overall negative attitudes to alcohol being expressed by women who had not self identified as experiencing alcohol dependency themselves, whereas those that had, expressed

more positive attitudes. Of course, the size of this group makes it impossible to generalise. It may also be that the negative attitudes existed before the abusive relationship or were more grounded in their experiences of their male partner's drinking.

Responsibility “someone has to be responsible”

The idea of responsibility dominated the women's narratives; someone needs to be responsible was the requirement and this role fell to them. Women felt they had to be vigilant in their drinking behaviour because of their responsibilities as mothers. Some described needing to 'catch themselves' when the temptation to turn to alcohol for emotional support arose. A number of the women had self identified as having developed alcohol problems so had not succeeded in this level of self-policing (Foucault 1995). Contrastingly, women described their male partners as being free of such concerns. Being fit to drive and take care of children were reasons given for controlling their drinking and emphasised how women took the main responsibility for children even though some of the women also had the responsibility of jobs to consider. Women recognised their need to change their drinking habits from the time children were conceived. Similarities can be found with the studies of Scottish women drinking in mid-life (Lyons et al. 2014; Emslie et al. 2015) in the way that women worked to position themselves as respectable and responsible female drinkers whose drinking only took place after their responsibilities as workers, mothers and partners had been met. Contrastingly, what was absent in the present study was a contemporary discourse of motherhood where appropriate attention to maternal responsibilities is balanced with attempts to find 'me time'; space for relaxation and autonomy. Indeed, dominant constructions across the current study present a need for women to be responsible carers and nurturers, in a self-denying way, clearly conflict with notions of female pleasure beyond the family unit. There would appear to be little space for leisure or pleasure to be found in alcohol for women experiencing domestic abuse.

No space for leisure or pleasure

Women who had developed alcohol problems were the ones that spoke more positively about the pleasure to be found in drinking, but that came only after

separation and recovery. However, during their time living in a domestic abuse context, the only talk of escape or time-out was in the need to escape what was 'going on inside their heads'. Drinking to escape was described differently by each woman; escaping loneliness, isolation, the trauma of sexual abuse, but had the commonality of emotional turmoil. Such feelings arose from conflicting expectations and the reality of the relationship, a feeling of 'living in the madness' and generally feeling trapped by it all. Escaping the physical abuse was never articulated, which supports the idea put forward by previous feminist work that has argued that women find the invisible, non-physical abuses the hardest to deal with (Stark 2007, Williamson 2010). Drinking to cope appeared to work for some and not others, but overall tended to have a temporary nature to its success. For most, it started as positive drinking but led to negative drinking; when women experience problems with their alcohol use it inevitably leads to disapproval (Ettorre 1997).

Viewing alcohol use as a reasonable response to abuse appears to be a position not readily accepted, as a body of literature debating the rationale and acceptability of 'drinking to cope' testifies (Bancroft 2009; Peters et al. 2012; Johnston 2013; Galvani and Toft 2015). A number of stakeholders in this study, working to support women recovering from domestic abuse and problematic alcohol use, recognised drinking as a rational response to deal with the trauma and hyper-vigilance experienced as part of living with domestic abuse. One strongly suggested that alcohol may have kept some women alive, as without such a coping mechanism they may otherwise have resorted to suicide. In Waterson's (2000) study of non-abused women, 'drinking to cope' with troubles was far less common than drinking because they liked it and took pleasure in it, also because their social situation encouraged it. However, when women did identify as using alcohol to cope with problems they tended to be tinged with shame and related to feelings of failure as wives or mothers. In contrast, the women in this study showed little indication of finding fun and pleasure in alcohol and were more inclined to feel the negative, shame inducing experience of it. One of the aims of this study was to consider women's drinking as a rational choice within the context of their particular material and social situations, in particular as they balance multiple risks against each other. Through an examination of their motivations for drinking within the context of domestic abuse, these findings have provided insight as to the constraints and limited choices available to them. Very little research has

explored women's own use of alcohol in the domestic abuse context, and in particular examining it through the lens of coercive control. These findings should be considered insightful and a launching board for further research in this area.

Mothering

Women in the current study were acutely aware of their responsibilities as mothers. They were highly conscious of the potential for this to be used against them in various forms of 'mother blaming', whether alcohol was an issue or not. A body of feminist work has explored the difficulties in 'mothering' through domestic abuse, underpinned by the gendered assumptions of the institution of mothering, which enables abusive partners to manipulate both their partners and the system. A range of issues found in previous studies were reported in the current study; increased responsibility and less control over their mothering (Lapierre 2010), maternal alienation (Morris 2009), the use of children to discredit mothers, and being set up to fail due to the overburdening of women with impossible standards for household tasks (Radford and Hester 2006). Maternal alienation was predominantly experienced by the subset of women who had identified as having developed alcohol problems. Alcohol and the societal shame attached to drinking mothers has a powerful historical legacy that continues to be the basis for targeting women as mothers (Waterson 2000). Researchers have identified two dominant gendered discourses that have been influential within families and across services; firstly a discourse that erases men's accountability for abuse yet inflates their importance as fathers, secondly a discourse that positions mothers as responsible for all problems within families, while making invisible their efforts as primary carers of children (Radford and Hester 2006; Morris 2009). The power for men to define reality was again recognised as a factor that contributed to men's ability to deflect attention away from themselves and onto the women's behaviour. This was seen as problematic by both women survivors and stakeholders in this study.

Women felt unjustly scrutinised by services as mothers, and stakeholders were concerned that the ability for men to influence services demonstrated a clear lack of understanding about the coercive controlling aspects of domestic abuse and the increased risk they may place on women. This disproportionate focus by services on women's behaviour was seen in negative terms, with a suggestion by stakeholders

that it can do more harm than good and therefore was better to 'not come on the radar', particularly of child protection services. As Radford and Hester (2006, pp.16-17) put it so clearly such an approach fails to consider "perpetrators' actions, the wider social and political control of women and, most importantly, how women cope with abuse on a daily basis and, in most cases, overcome it". The concerns raised in this area involved both women who drank and those who didn't, although women's use of alcohol was felt to leave them more vulnerable to a further level of victim blaming by services both statutory and non-statutory. The risk that women may avoid accessing services for fear of being judged and blamed raises particular concern for the safety of both women and children. Therefore increased cross-agency awareness of the coercive controlling nature of domestic abuse and how it intersects with women's alcohol use and/or mothering is required.

However, the sense of feeling judged by others was not limited to services. Women in this study also identified feeling judged and stigmatised by having experienced domestic abuse. They identified this as part of a pervasive victim blaming culture that appeared to hold them responsible for their own abuse. Women strongly resisted this in terms of 'we didn't choose this'. There was an awareness that partially underpinning this was a judgement relating to the ubiquitous 'why doesn't she leave?' question. Such judgement was experienced from friends, family, colleagues and other non-specialist services such as housing and employment agencies and demonstrates a general lack of understanding of the complexities of living with domestic abuse. In the view of stakeholders, where problematic alcohol use was involved, abused women were often considered more to blame and less worthy by services, often being perceived as chaotic. An improved understanding of the complexity of coercive control, and the intersections with women's drinking is required to address what are possibly unconscious biases in the service sector.

Narratives

So far, this chapter has discussed the challenges women faced in negotiating everyday life and alcohol use under the conditions of domestic abuse. A further component of the research question was to examine what narratives women construct in sharing and making sense of their experiences. To do this is not to embark on formal narrative analysis. As pointed out by Frank (2000), the term

narrative may be used interchangeably with that of story, as people do not tell narratives, they tell stories. The stories told by the women in the current study revealed narratives that demonstrated patterns and a level of commonality in relation to societal discourses. Wood (2001) points out that narratives are often imbricated: overlapping like tiles on a roof. In Chapter one of this thesis, I suggested that we all draw upon a range of discourses, a 'wallpaper' of attitudes and ways of thinking and being, that influence our lived experience and our understanding of that lived experience. I use the idea of wallpaper in the sense that it is just so accepted, in the background, that we cease to notice it. The wallpaper therefore comprises these taken-for-granted discourses. As Foucault stressed, any dominant discourse, whilst seeming normal or commonsensical, is always susceptible to being replaced by another. Equally, discourses are multiple and therefore may offer contradictory ways of giving meaning to the world (Foucault 1995). Examination of the narratives generated, revealed how women's narratives both drew upon and resisted dominant discourses. It was also possible to identify different sources of these discourses which variably challenged or reinforced one other.

Examples of sources found in the women's narratives are highlighted in the diagram below Figure 5:

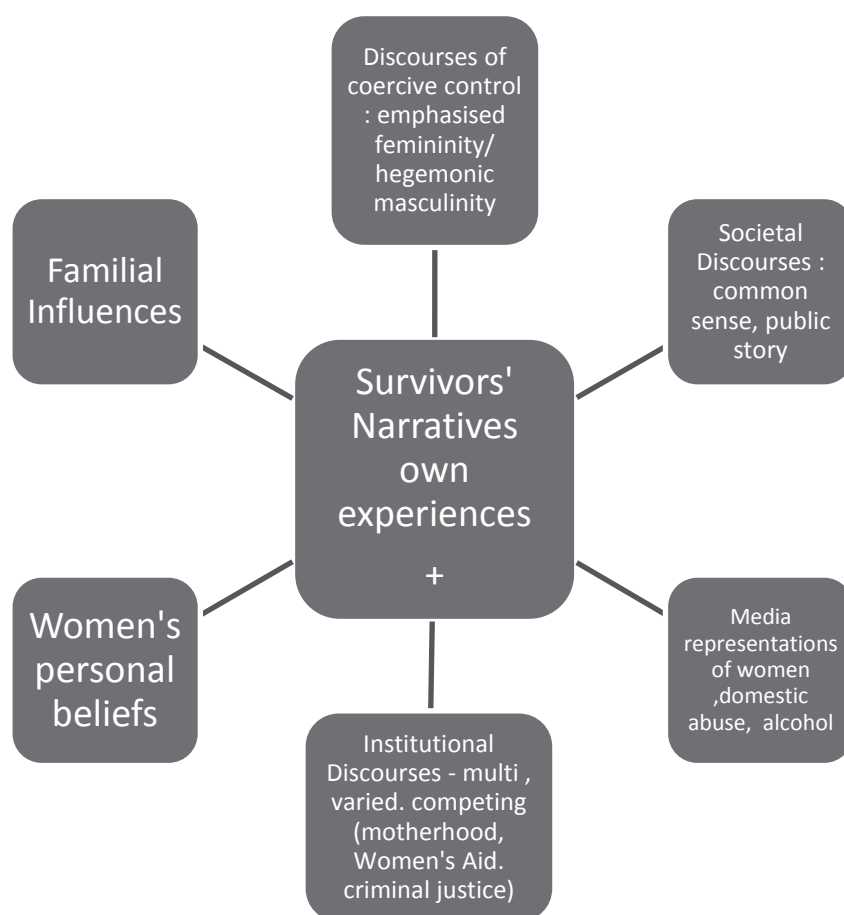


Figure 5: Sources influencing women's narratives

While this is in no way a definitive list, it is indicative of the range of discourses that influenced the women's lives. These are also interactional, for example, women's personal beliefs and family narratives appeared to draw upon societal and media discourses, relating to expectations of marriage and intimate relationships. Institutional discourses were multiple and varied. The societal institution of motherhood was found to reinforce mother blaming, which can be seen through an institutional narrative that holds women entirely responsible for children's welfare regardless of the abusive behaviour of the father. Institutions such as Women's Aid, incorporating the Freedom Programme, directly challenged discourses of coercive control, in an attempt to reconstruct women's individual and societal understandings of domestic abuse and alcohol use. Such an institutional narrative reinforces the message that men are responsible for abuse and not alcohol, thus challenging the 'blame the drink' narrative.

Managing these oppositional discourses created problems for the women in making sense of their experiences and responses during, and beyond, the period living with domestic abuse. The model below in Figure 6 represents an example of how survivor's narratives drew upon directly conflicting discourses:



Figure 6: Directly Competing Discourses

The abuser's definitional hegemony, during the abusive relationship, used discourses of coercive control to minimise men's responsibility for abuse and to maximise women's (e.g. blame the drink, blame the woman, blame the woman's drinking). This resonates with previous findings of Gilchrist et al. (2014). In contrast, institutional explanations provided by support services, strongly disputed these discourses. The challenge facing women was to find coherence in these conflicting messages, while still being exposed to societal and media discourses that reinforced the abuser's rationalisation.

A process of coming to understand their experiences differently sometimes depended on other people's perspectives. Antonio Gramsci's concepts of common sense and good sense are useful here. Common sense can be understood to be the

“incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society” (Gramsci 1971, p. 323), although there is not just one common sense. Good sense is defined as “the healthy nucleus that exists in common sense” (Gramsci 1971, p.323) and a remnant of practical consciousness in oppressed people that recognises this, can often be a basis for resistance (Cox and Nilsen 2014). Entrapped in the conditions of coercive control it may have made ‘common’ sense to comply with the abuser’s wishes. As abuse became normalised women came to understand their lifeworld in a certain way. A sense of what is normal in intimate relationships may readily appear as common sense, especially when other discourses reinforce the perpetrator’s viewpoint. What could be considered ‘good sense moments’ occurred to remind them that this was not inevitable. Random acts of apparent kindness on the part of abusers, such as making her a cup of tea or running her a bath, were perceived as exceptional until put in perspective by others. Blaming the drink, or blaming herself, for his behaviour appeared to make sense while living under such conditions until challenged by institutional narratives presented by support agencies such as Women’s Aid.

However, despite entrapment, women retained a consciousness of that healthy nucleus that was there to be fought for through acts of resistance. Women’s narratives highlighted both compliance with, and resistance to, discourses. They also drew attention to the gendered nature of the dominant discourses in play. Narratives of femininity such as ‘trying to be perfect’, ‘if I had been more feminine’, ‘needing to stay in control’ can be seen as examples that conform to discourses of emphasised femininity, victim blaming, self blame and essentialism. Contrastingly, narratives constructing themselves as ‘strong women, not the kitchen type’, ‘into men’s jobs’, ‘earning more than him’, subverted emphasised femininity and hegemonic masculinity through a discourse of equality.

A discourse of hegemonic masculinity, identifiable in coercive control, and reinforced by societal and media discourses, was equally prominent in women’s narratives of masculinity. Compliance was reflected in ‘the power of a man’, ‘his way or the high way’, ‘in his eyes you’re his’, and ‘king of the castle’. Yet, these were equally resisted by narratives of ‘we didn’t choose this’, ‘drinking in public spaces’, ‘drinking in gay spaces’, ‘sleeping pills in his tea’, and ‘alcohol is just an excuse’.

This final part of the discussion has reinforced the power of discourses, and how women were exposed to competing and contradictory ways of being and understanding their experiences. Closer examination of the women's narratives, which traversed the themes, also emphasised the women's part in "the dance of resistance and control" (Stark 2007, p 232). Furthermore, it emphasised the power of the common sense nature of the public story of domestic abuse and alcohol use.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the primary aim of this research was to examine women's experiences of living with domestic abuse and to explore how they managed and negotiated their own alcohol use within this context. A major premise of this research was that we cannot aim to understand the role that alcohol plays in domestic abuse until we understand the type of abuse being experienced. Understanding both the historical and contemporary feminist theoretical thinking on domestic abuse guided the study towards a need to be sensitive to issues of power and control in the women's narratives. The use of typology and gender models, combined with contemporary frameworks of control, were invaluable in identifying that the women participants were living under conditions of intimate terrorism and coercive control. This was not only a critical starting point for this study but enabled links to be made to interconnecting constraints that exert power in the broader social context, while at the same time allowing a nuanced exploration of how women experienced, and survived, living under those conditions.

Chapters two to six set out the background, rationale, methodology, research design and findings of the study, which involved two Photovoice groups with eight women survivors of domestic abuse and ten interviews with stakeholders from related fields. Chapter seven discussed the findings in the context of existing literature. This chapter will revisit the key themes and findings to highlight the contribution of this study to the fields of both domestic abuse and alcohol research. It will also identify its potential contribution to policy and practice as well as making recommendations for future research.

The theme of managing the lived experience of domestic abuse highlighted the many challenges facing women surviving conditions of entrapment in personal life. The importance of the human need to make sense of our experiences has been highlighted by other authors (Berns and Schweingruber 2007, Lim et al. 2015). This study builds upon that body of work by emphasising the specific challenges and difficulties faced by women living with abuse in doing so. It also recognises the importance of the limited space for action identified by previous domestic abuse work

(Stark 2007, Kelly et al. 2014) and expands that concept to include the idea of a limited 'space for understanding' experienced by women living with abuse. As women described how they managed their day to day lives living under regimes of coercive control, they highlighted how fear, isolation, intimidation and unpredictability made it challenging to survive both physically and psychologically. Women's space for understanding of what was happening to them was not only severely compromised by the constraints of the abusive relationship, but by conflicting gendered discourses, beliefs and versions of reality. A clear distinction was made between making sense of experiences of abuse when in the relationship and after leaving the relationship. The critical influence of competing discourses on the women's lives, both during and after living in the abusive relationship, was revealed through their narratives. This raises important issues about a need for awareness of the impact of public discourses, often perpetuated through the media, that in turn frame the public story of both domestic abuse and women's alcohol use, and how that public story impacts on survivors' own understanding of their experiences.

The limited autonomy experienced as part of coercive control extended to women's choices around their own alcohol use. Under such conditions the idea of 'choice' in relation to their drinking was a fragile one. Barred from self determination, all decisions about drinking were made with their partner's reaction in mind and an awareness of ideals of appropriate femininity. The need was therefore to be vigilant to the needs and demands of their partners as well as those of wider society. As such, their choices were framed in terms of drinking dilemmas, where potential outcomes were rarely positive for them. Periods of abstinence were 'chosen' by some as an attempt to retain a vestige of control. Women described multiple and subtle ways in which they were coerced or forced to drink, or their drinking was used as a threat against them by their partners, making drinking a risky 'choice' for women. It is clear that the risks to be navigated were significantly different from those experienced by other women not experiencing coercive control and violence.

Ideals of motherhood were found to be used as a tool for control, particularly in relation to threats to report women to services if they drank alcohol, with associated threats of loss of child custody. Women who drank were also deliberately shamed in front of their children as a form of abuse. These findings form a further contribution to

existing work on the misuse of the institution of motherhood (Radford and Hester 2006, Lapierre 2010) and tactics of maternal alienation (Morris 2009). The way that gendered discourses around mothering position mothers as ultimately responsible for all problems in families, while allowing abusive men's accountability to be erased, need to be acknowledged and addressed by services and wider society.

Through the theme of dilemmas this study highlighted a range of tactics that can be categorised as 'substance use coercion': physical force, emotional blackmail, sexual jealousy, threats, shaming and financial control. Such tactics often remain invisible as they are bound up in the category of gendered norms. Little research has been undertaken to investigate the multiple and often invisible ways that substance use coercion operates, and the range of tactics deployed. The findings in this study add to the limited body of knowledge (Warsaw et al. 2014) by highlighting how such tactics can be considered a part of the constellation of abuses that constitute coercive control.

Women reported limited space for leisure or pleasure in alcohol consumption. Socialising independently in public drinking spaces was found to be impacted by their partner's 'search and destroy missions' aimed at reinstating control. Women also experienced persistent double standards directed at women who drink in public spaces, relating to ideals of appropriate femininity. This was specifically reported in the traditional local pub environments which continued to be male dominated segregated spaces. Gay drinking spaces were highlighted as a potential place of refuge from abusive partners and the threat of male violence. These findings challenge contemporary ideas that women's alcohol consumption can be considered a normal and pleasurable part of everyday life and develop previous research that has identified the continued risks women face when drinking in public space. While much of the existing focus has been on the gendered nature of risks facing young women and alcohol, this study highlights the impact of the continued double standards discourse on a broad range of women in both private and public space.

All of the women experimented with alcohol as a coping mechanism at some time. A number of them self-identified as having developed alcohol dependency as a result. When women did 'drink to cope' it was found to be in relation to escaping what was going on 'inside their heads' rather than the physical abuse. In many ways this can

be considered a rational choice within the context of their daily lives. Yet, women felt judged by many sections of society for having experienced domestic abuse, alcohol dependency or both. They reported that they appeared to be held responsible for their own abuse, reflecting an ongoing victim-blaming discourse. The evidence suggests that this situation of double jeopardy arose from attitudes, not only in wider society, but from support services. While this highlights the need to change public attitudes, it is crucially important for services to attend to the possibility that they may perpetuate such discourses.

One of the feminist criticisms of women and alcohol research was that it had excluded human feeling and a space for compassion. Calls were made for a woman sensitive approach that aids an understanding of how women may not only be hurt by alcohol use itself, but furthermore by a lack of understanding of the issues relating to their drinking (Ettorre 1992). The current study addressed this gap by opening up the space for women to explore their own experiences in a broader social context and identify the changes they desired to see. While this was primarily a domestic abuse study, by examining alcohol use in this context, it has delivered an insight to not only the hidden harms of abuse, but also to the related harmful pressures and prejudices women experience around alcohol. The hidden nature of domestic abuse, particularly coercive control, succeeds in maintaining the invisibility of the conditions under which some women make, what appear to be, their lifestyle choices.

However, to state this oversimplifies how women experienced that control and constantly formed strategies of resistance. Women worked hard to manage their limited autonomy. Nevertheless, their narratives were also interwoven with reference to dominant gendered discourses in society that operate to sustain the existing gender order, despite decades of feminist work to address patriarchal power. Women were not only entrapped in personal life by their abusive partner's demands and rules but were also trapped by ideals of femininity, expectations of intimate relationships, and continued belief in women's roles as being primary carers. While to some extent this was influenced by their partner's enforcement of emphasised femininity, it was also part of living in a gender differentiated society, particularly one where a double standards discourse still persists around alcohol but is often hidden by the myth of gender equality. It is this 'wallpaper' or backdrop that we all live with

that shapes women's decisions about how, when and where they may drink. These findings indicate the need for a shift in attitude towards women who experience domestic abuse that challenges the culture of blame, particularly where alcohol is involved.

Contribution to theory

This study was distinctive in multiple ways. Privileging women's voices and experiences as a source of knowledge through a visual participatory method and combining this with contemporary feminist understandings of domestic abuse produced a small, rich and unique body of knowledge on the subject of domestic abuse and alcohol. Of theoretical importance was the bringing together of Michael Johnson's (2008) typology of domestic violence with Evan Stark's (2007) framework of coercive control, creating a lens through which a nuanced understanding of the complexity of domestic abuse could be revealed. In turn, this enabled new insights in relation to not only how women understood, managed and negotiated the use of alcohol within this intimate context, but how gendered societal discourses intersected with those experiences.

These models challenge approaches that focus solely upon men's drinking and physical abuse, that risk neglecting issues of power and control, and thereby fail to reveal the complexity of domestic abuse and the implications of alcohol within this context. This study revealed that taking an alternative approach is not about undermining the importance of physical abuse, but about illustrating the part it plays in the broader constellation of abuses that aim to entrap women in personal life. Opening up a space for women's voices to be heard revealed how women's alcohol use can become a further tool for control to be wielded by men, within the complex web of coercive control.

While this study drew upon these gendered models and contemporary typologies, demonstrating the benefit of a gendered feminist analysis, in doing so it also contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of domestic abuse and alcohol for women. By identifying the varied and conflicting discourses and narratives that women drew upon, or resisted, it was possible to develop a heuristic model of sources influencing women's understanding of their experiences. This

model not only identifies the types of potential sources and how they may operate, but also highlights how discourses and narratives may conflict with or reinforce one another. In doing so it provides insight into the complex task women face in finding coherence in their lived experience of domestic abuse and alcohol use. It also draws attention to the gendered and invisible nature of many of these discourses as they are hidden in the societal 'wallpaper'.

Recognising the temporal nature of this model is critical, as the women made a clear distinction between their time being in the abusive situation and their life after separation, with a shift in the dominance of different discourses across this timeframe. As women engage with different services they may be exposed to new institutional narratives that may leave them conflicted, as these may challenge previous powerful influences, such as the voice of the perpetrator. Equally, the institutional narratives, such as those of motherhood, may be used by services and be experienced negatively by women as reinforcing a victim blaming discourse. Raising awareness of the influence of these interrelated narratives and discourses, their gendered nature and how they shift across time and space, is a critical addition to the body of feminist knowledge on domestic abuse in general, and its intersection with alcohol use in particular.

The value of Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

However, the originality of this study lay not only in the use of contemporary theoretical frameworks, but crucially in the methodology of Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) and the deployment of the visual research method of Photovoice. This combination had not been used to explore survivors' experiences of domestic abuse and alcohol before, and offered the opportunity for women to work as co-researchers and the producers of knowledge in relation to their own lived experience. This approach demonstrated multiple benefits for the participants as well as enriching the quality of the knowledge generated.

I have previously stressed how methodologically the metaphor of 'voice' is common to both feminist and action research, sharing the idea that to listen to people is to empower them (Maguire 2000). It was clear from the outset of the study that the concept of voice or 'having a voice' was extremely important to the women

participants, having been silenced within their intimate relationships and sometimes wider social settings. The findings indicate that the Photovoice group sessions successfully opened up a safe space for women to talk about aspects of their experiences, relating to alcohol and domestic abuse, that they may not have otherwise shared. As the support worker reflected, these sessions, while experienced as therapeutic, were different from their normal support sessions and new disclosures may have been one indicator of the level of trust in the group setting.

Throughout this process there were also multiple opportunities for decision making and autonomy. Each participant had the power to effectively direct our gaze toward images and text that reflected their world from their own standpoints (Harding 1987; Frohmann 2005). The act of deciding what to include or exclude as the subjects of the photographs, and ultimately what photos and text to include in the study, were important decision points for the participants. Although uncertain at the start of the project, the women demonstrated a broad range of creative approaches, with some exhibiting a level of critical thinking in the use of visual metaphors. This development was inspiring and represented ownership and empowerment on their part. Yet the most representative act of empowerment may be considered the decision by three of the women to place themselves in the images, rejecting the cloak of anonymity normally associated with such research.

One of the goals of participatory action research and this project in particular was the development of the critical consciousness of participants. The group dialogue, at the core of the Photovoice process, enabled women to examine the contradictions and inequity inherent in societal attitudes, particularly towards women and alcohol and in holding women responsible for men's abusive behavior. It also made it possible to reflect upon shifts in their own understandings of the role of alcohol in a domestic abuse context. This process was key to not only enabling them to identify and articulate the changes they would like to see, but to engendering a sense that they could be part of those changes, through their participation in the research. As a result of this process, collectively the women called for large scale changes in society around education on domestic abuse from school age, training for anyone

working with abused women, societal attitudes to women and alcohol in general and a campaign to look at the bigger picture of alcohol and domestic abuse.

Individually, evidence for the positive impact of reflection through participation in Photovoice was exemplified in the case study of Shona, highlighted in Chapter Three. Shona shared how participation in the Photovoice sessions had allowed her to develop a deeper self-understanding in relation to her own use of photographs which she used to take randomly but never knew why. She also indicated an ambition to run her own project, wanting other women to share and benefit from the Photovoice experience. The evidence suggests that participation in the Photovoice sessions provided both a space for reflection and personal growth.

As highlighted in Chapter three, action within action research is complex and varied, and therefore needs to be considered on multiple levels, not just from a positive empowerment perspective. It can be risky for marginalised and silenced groups to speak out or attempt to take action (Williams and Lykes 2003; Reid et al. 2006). The women participants in both Photovoice groups took risks. By participating in general they risked misrepresentation and exploitation. In the group sessions they risked judgment, re-traumatisation as they recounted their experiences, and the possibility of critical feedback on their photographs. As they made conscious decisions about including themselves in the photographs, some risked exposure in public.

I have witnessed, through disseminating this research, using the photos and women's narratives, the power of their work. At exhibitions, in teaching situations and at conferences I have seen a range of reactions, particularly to the photographs; shock, horror, pity, respect for their courage, outrage at the persistence of such abuse of women and sadly, sometimes disrespect. I have experienced both challenges to my integrity for using the materials and at the other end of the spectrum, appreciation for exposing the issues. Additionally the material has provoked personal disclosures. All of these reactions inspire me to do more, and act to promote the power of visual research methods and in particular Photovoice.

It is worth reiterating that transformation within action research is a process and not a one-time event. It was important to consider participation as a form of action on two levels: specific acts arising from the project and the ongoing process of change

and growth at an individual level (Maguire 2000). For some, participation in Photovoice represented both an opportunity and a tool for personal growth and education. At an individual level actions arising from the project need to be considered in the context of actions that were underway prior to participation in this project. This acknowledges how all women were at different stages of building or consolidating new lives while continuing to engage with ongoing struggles negotiating and challenging systems of power. Equally they continued to try to make sense of their experiences. Participation in the Photovoice group sessions appeared to provide a further step in building up a better understanding of these experiences, through sharing and dialogue. The evidence suggests that participation in the Photovoice sessions provided both a space for reflection and therefore a further step in the journey of recovery.

Considering action at a collective level, the participants were fully involved and in attendance at the first photographic exhibition, allowing them to see the impact of their work. Subsequently, I encouraged the participants and the collaborative partner organisation to consider other ideas and opportunities for using the photographs. However, the nature of the doctorate process is that it is stretched over at least three years. This made continued contact with the participants difficult. They had initially been reluctant to share contact information directly with me, preferring to go through the support worker. My collaborative partners and I agreed to exhibit the photographs at Queen Margaret University for the annual international campaign for '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence', and at a related feminist conference, both in November 2015. Photographs taken at this exhibition can be found in Appendix H. Six months had passed by this time and on this occasion only staff from the service attended; some women had moved on from the service and others had just moved on. The power of their photo-narratives continued to have impact upon students and university staff, provoking strong reactions. As a result of this exhibit I was invited to talk about the research to district nursing and occupational health students, to offer a real world perspective to their training and there are plans to work with drama students to develop a performance based upon the women's images and voices. The work of dissemination is ongoing as I seek opportunities for exhibitions through an application to the Scottish Parliament for internal display space, to raise awareness of the women's concerns with national

policy makers, and discuss opportunities to exhibit in libraries and community spaces. It is also important to complete the cycle of consciousness raising by reporting back on the findings to the collaborative partners and the participants themselves. Research summary reports will be developed to serve this purpose and any other outputs will be shared with the partners. Such individual and collective actions, as described above, may therefore be conceptualised as transformations in women's 'space for understanding', enabling an expansion of that space through participation.

The title of this thesis was chosen by the women indirectly as it was adopted from their photographic exhibition title. The idea of Same Hell, Different Devils imbues a sense of hopelessness and inevitability and this was reflected in the narratives describing their life at that time. But the other side of the story was that they did survive their individual hells and are working to reclaim their autonomy. By choosing to participate in this research they invested considerable time and effort to have their voices heard through image and text. It is therefore the job of this research to ensure that these voices are heard and for future research and policy makers to see the benefit of participatory and visual research that involves women in knowledge creation and the prioritisation of their voices in relation to their own lived experience.

Implications for practice

While it is important to consider the benefits from this one project it is also worth considering its place in the broader scheme of service provision. From my involvement with the collaborative partners, I also observed the positive work being achieved within this particular Women's Aid service by encouraging participation in multiple, regular creative projects. During my time with them, some of the participants were also involved in working with a choreographer to develop a dance routine to be performed at awareness raising events and have been involved in a poetry workshop. It is clear that this particular service works from an empowerment model that encourages continuous personal growth partially achieved through such projects. I argue that a Photovoice project, employed within a critical feminist framework, whether for research or personal exploration, fits well within such a service offering and should be considered by a broad range of agencies supporting women.

Participatory research in this project was time consuming, messy and challenging for both the participants and myself. Yet for most participants, it offered opportunities for creativity, personal growth and empowerment. While actions arising from the study, both individually and collectively could not be described as revolutionary, they indicated significant steps of different forms of liberation achieved through a consciousness raising process. Research taking this approach should not be underestimated in its value to participants, who continue to negotiate structures of power on a daily basis, but also for its contribution to enabling women's voices to be heard in the broader emancipatory project.

The findings from this research may be useful in informing practice by providing a broader understanding of the complexities of domestic abuse and the impact on women's choices around alcohol. This may further assist practitioners in reflecting upon where they may carry their own unconscious biases towards women and the duality of domestic abuse and alcohol. The knowledge created by the participants may assist practitioners in recognising that, what appear to be lifestyle choices are not necessarily choices freely made, and may be part of a wider pattern of control. Practitioners may also benefit from a greater understanding of the dilemmas women face in managing their safety as they manage conflicting discourses and narratives. As articulated by the participants, training should also be extended to include services such as housing and employment services to improve women survivor's experiences at a critical point in their lives.

Implications for policy and future research

Despite an increasing awareness of coercive control reflected in both government policy and domestic abuse support agencies, the testimony of the participants indicates that there remains a gap in understanding of survivors' lived experience. Ultimately, the women called directly for large scale changes in society through improved education on domestic abuse from school age, and training for anyone working with abused women. A change in societal attitudes to women and alcohol in general to reduce the stigma, and a campaign to look at the bigger picture of alcohol and domestic abuse, were also identified as calls to action.

A key implication of the findings is the need for education initiatives that more accurately reflect both the experiences of abused women and the complexity of the role that alcohol plays within that context. Clear public and health education messages are required that shift the public story away from alcohol being the cause of domestic abuse, in favour of a more complex understanding of the potential for alcohol to become a tool for control and entrapment of women. Further feminist research in this area, from a woman's perspective is required to build upon the findings from this study.

While the current study focused on a gendered analysis it recognised the complexities of the social world and the importance of the intersectional impact of other cultural, structural and economic influences, including class, ethnicity and race which are at play in many women's lives. Analysis and commentary on class, ethnicity and race were limited by the participant sample and data collected but would be useful lenses through which to focus future research in this area.

A gendered analysis and approach to domestic abuse policy is well established in the Scottish context. Alcohol policy work may benefit from the recognition of continuing inequality in attitudes to women and alcohol, based on gender, which contribute to a particular stigma and may contribute to the double stigma of being a victim of domestic abuse and experiencing alcohol dependency.

At a local level, support agencies may benefit from reviewing their policies and practices in relation to recognising the possibility of alcohol playing a role within a woman's experience of domestic abuse and the potential for domestic abuse being an underlying issue for women presenting with alcohol issues. More critically, adequate procedures and specialist training are required to respond to this complexity.

Future research on domestic abuse in general would benefit from deploying contemporary models such as those of Michael Johnson (2008) and Evan Stark (2007) to distinguish between different types of abuse. This in turn would enable researchers to ask the appropriate questions and frame their analysis accordingly. More importantly, this would enable the contextualising of acts of physical violence appropriately.

Findings from this study highlighted the difficulties women underwent in making sense of their experiences. Attending Women's Aid support services and associated programmes, such as the Freedom Programme, appeared to be influential. This warrants further research into the impact of support services and programmes on how women understand their experiences. In particular, there may be value in further examining the extent to which such interventions impact upon women's perceptions of blame and responsibility over time.

The current study highlighted a range of abuses that could be categorised as substance use coercion and also reported acts of mental health coercion. Further work specifically examining connections between these would be a useful avenue of enquiry, especially being sensitive to the ways that substance use coercion may be interwoven in the web of coercive control. Additionally, this research exposed women's experiences of shame in relation to both domestic abuse and alcohol dependency. This raised a question of whether there may be a hierarchy of shame for women who experienced the duality of both issues.

Overall, this study generated a small but rich contribution to the limited body of knowledge on the subject of domestic abuse and alcohol use, from a woman survivor's perspective. Equally important was the use of a visual and participatory method to generate this knowledge. While challenging and potentially risky for participants the evidence suggests it was a beneficial experience for both participants and the researcher. Additionally, this provided alternative means of dissemination and engagement with different audiences in an attempt to change the public story of domestic abuse, and alcohol's role within it. In particular, being a domestic abuse survivor-led contribution generated an alternative 'space for understanding'. Dissemination so far has generated much interest, particularly provoked by the combination of visual and textual representations of women's voices. This is an important observation that should be heeded for future qualitative work if women's voices are to be heard.

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Appendix A: Photovoice Process Model

The Photovoice Model

A minimum of three group sessions are required with a group size of 7 to 10 participants recommended by the founders of the method (Wang 1999) for practical ease and to allow in-depth discussion.

Session 1

The introductory group session will be key to orienting the participants to the Photovoice research process and setting their expectations as participants. Safety, confidentiality and respect will be discussed and agreed as a group as it is key to develop collective trust. (I will also have spoken to each participant individually in advance). Throughout the project, prompts, guidance and equipment (if required) will be provided by myself. A handout of specific prompts will be supplied to participants to guide them on the scope of the project when taking photos.

The ethical implications of the taking and publishing of photographs will be clearly stated. The women will be encouraged to photograph spaces, places, objects and other phenomena that portray their experiences. Particular issues of the power and responsibility of the photographer and informed consent if photographing people will be stressed. Examples from previous studies will be provided for discussion to help participants understand what is required. The participants will be asked to take photographs for the next session as per the guidance notes supplied.

Session 2

Each session will begin with checking-in on how everyone is feeling about the process and their experiences. The focus of this session is defined as selecting, contextualising and codifying (Wang & Burris 1997).

Selecting: participants will each be asked to choose four of their own photographs that they think best represent their experiences of the topic.

Contextualising: in turn each person will be asked to talk about each photo, partly driven by prompts but they are free to offer any other info. Wang & Burris (1999) recommend a prompting technique based around the acronym **SHOWeD:**

What do you See here?

What is really Happening here?

How does this relate to Our lives?

Why does this situation, concern or strength exist?

What can we Do about it?

However, this has been rejected by some participants in previous studies as being too restrictive (Mcintyre 2003).

Codifying: The key at this stage is to enter into dialogue as a group with the researcher facilitating a process to develop themes from the issues that arise from the photos and narratives. Although I will facilitate this discussion it is key that the themes and messages come from the women's voices. These steps are repeated for each group of photographs. The Photovoice literature is non-specific about this part of the process. However, by drawing directly upon Paulo Freire's (1996) methodology of thematic investigation, the photographs will be treated as coded representations of existential situations that can be decoded through systematic interrogation. The generative themes that arise from participant's thinking of their reality will be explored through further dialogue.

This session will revisit the themes identified from session 2 and will, again through group dialogue, refine them to the key themes, issues and a final selection of photographs that best represent these. Having identified themes and issues, the participants will be asked to reflect upon these and what action they consider may be taken to address them. They will also be asked to feedback on what they may have gained from the process of participation in this Photovoice study.

One of the potential outputs from the research is making use of the photographs and short narratives to create a photo exhibition that can be used to raise public awareness of the issues or influence policymakers. This will be discussed and decided as a group. If necessary further sessions can be scheduled to progress this.

Each session will be audio-recorded (with participants' permission) and transcribed. Participants will be free to withdraw at any time. Consideration will be given to participants' needs in relation to childcare, travel expenses and other potential barriers to attending the sessions.

Appendix B: Photovoice Guidance & Prompts

‘Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol Use’

Photovoice Guidance & Prompts

Please feel free to take photos of objects, spaces or places that are meaningful to you.

You can use the prompts below to help you focus on certain aspects - but you don't have to be restricted by them.

Try to relax and take your time.

This is not a photo competition.

It is not about technique or creative ability.

Taking your own photographs is a way of expressing yourself.

You may find it useful to use a notebook to capture your thoughts for each photo.

There are no right or wrong photos.

It is about your own story, your own experiences.

Prompts – Think about

What were your experiences of drinking during (or after) an abusive relationship?

What motivated you to drink?

Were you free to enjoy alcohol or were there pressures or restrictions around drinking?

Did you need to hide it?

Were you judged or criticised?

- By yourself?
- By others? (partner, family, friends, social workers, police etc...)

What impact do you feel your drinking have on you or others ?

Appendix C: Photovoice Recruitment Flyer



“...women’s drinking, pleasure or pain?” (Etorre 1997)

Research Project

Exploring women’s experiences of alcohol and domestic abuse.

Many people say women use alcohol to cope with domestic abuse. There is also evidence that social attitudes towards women drinking are more negative than they are towards men.

I am interested in hearing from women about their experiences of drinking in relation to domestic abuse. My name is Julie and I am a PhD student researching this area for my dissertation project at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. I am looking for women in Scotland to take part in this research.

Are you interested in taking photographs to tell your story?

This research will be based around photographs taken by yourself.

These will be used to allow you to tell your story in a secure group setting, so you will be in control.

Full guidance (and cameras if required) will be provided.

This is not a photography competition but a powerful way to say what is meaningful to you.

A full information sheet is available.

If you are interested in taking part or just want more information please contact me, details below.

If you are interested in sharing your experiences but not sure about the photography aspect, please contact me to discuss. Don’t worry, getting more information does not mean you have to take part.



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH



Contact Details

JYoung@gmu.ac.uk

Women's experiences of domestic abuse and alcohol:
Same hell, different devils

Appendix D: Photovoice Information Sheet & Consent Form

Women's experiences of domestic abuse and alcohol: Same hell, different devils



Queen Margaret University
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Photovoice Study

Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol use

My name is Julie Young and I am a PhD research student from the School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. As part of my PhD I am undertaking a research project. The title of my project is 'Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol Use'.

This study will specifically investigate women's experiences of using alcohol in relation to an abusive relationship. Unlike much public health research I am not interested in measuring how much women drink but will focus on what they think and feel about their own drinking, their specific circumstances and the attitudes of others towards them.

I am particularly interested in :

- Motivations for drinking (e.g. leisure, pleasure, coping, medicating, to gain control , being forced or persuaded)

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- Freedom to drink or any constraints?
- How or where drinking takes place (e.g pub, home, alone, with others)
- How women judge themselves.
- How women feel they are judged by others (e.g. partner, friends, family, police, social services, wider society)
- How do they feel it affects themselves or others.
- What support they get if they feel alcohol has become a problem.

It is anticipated that the findings will be valuable as research has rarely explored the views of women themselves in such situations even though they are the experts in their own lives. Also, indications are that there can be stigma attached to talking about it. Therefore, this research may be valuable to other women in a similar situation. The use of a photographic method, as described below, will empower each participant to control how her experiences are captured and described.

I am looking for volunteers who have experienced such living situations within a heterosexual intimate relationship.

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to explore your experiences by taking part in a Photovoice project. This is an established research method that will involve participants taking photographs of objects, places or spaces that are important to the individual and symbolise or represent their experiences of using alcohol whilst living in an abusive relationship. The meanings attached to the images will be determined by you and you will be asked to explore them as part of a small group (7-10) of other

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women who have volunteered to take part. The overall process will take place over three workshops no longer than 2 hours each.

The researcher is not aware of any risks associated with Photovoice or this study. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any stage and would not have to give a reason.

All data will be anonymised as much as possible. Group discussions will be audio recorded (with the group's permission). Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any reporting of the data gathered.

The results, including photographs, may be published in a journal or presented at a conference. Additionally, it may be an option to present the findings as a small photo exhibition. This will only take place if all are in agreement at that point of the study.

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If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to be a participant in the study, please now see the consent form.

Contact details of the researcher

Name of researcher: Julie Young

Address: Undergraduate Student, Psychology & Sociology
School of Arts, Social Sciences & Management
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Queen Margaret University Drive
Musselburgh
East Lothian EH21 6UU

Email / Telephone: JYoung@qmu.ac.uk 0131 474 0000

Contact details of the independent adviser not directly involved in this research.

Name of adviser: John Hughes

Address: Senior Lecturer , Psychology & Sociology

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School of Arts, Social Sciences & Management

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Queen Margaret University Drive

Musselburgh

East Lothian EH21 6UU

Email / Telephone: JHughes@qmu.ac.uk / 0131 474 0000

For support with any issues arising from this research you can contact your established Women's Aid support worker or alternatively Scottish Women's Aid who are the leading support organisation for women in relation to domestic abuse. They can also provide access to local support groups across Scotland and other support services.

Website : www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline : 0808 2000 247

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Photovoice Study

'Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol Use'

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

I agree that my photographs can be used in publications related to this project.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

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Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact details of the researcher

Name of researcher: Julie Young

Address: Undergraduate Student, Psychology & Sociology
School of Arts, Social Sciences & Management
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Appendix E: Stakeholder Interviews Information Sheet & Consent Form

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Interview

Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol use

My name is Julie Young and I am a PhD research student from the School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. As part of my PhD I am undertaking a research project. The title of my project is 'Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol Use'.

The overall project will specifically investigate women's experiences of using alcohol whilst in an abusive relationship. A separate exercise will capture a sample of women's own views.

This part of the study focuses on professional support workers' views on the role that alcohol plays in women's lives whilst experiencing domestic abuse.

I am particularly interested in :

- Impact on ability or willingness to disclose or seek support.
- Societal attitudes.

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- How women feel they are judged by themselves or others (e.g. partner, friends, family, police, social services, wider society)
- How it affects themselves or others.
- What support they get if they feel alcohol has become a problem. Are services equipped to deal with the dual issues?

The views of professionals will be valuable in putting the women's own experiences into context and highlighting any particular issues from a support perspective. .

It is anticipated that the findings will be valuable as research has rarely explored the views of women themselves in such situations even though they are the experts in their own lives. Taking multiple perspectives may enrich the value of the research that can inform future service provision and policy.

I am looking for professionals who have experience of supporting women who have experienced domestic abuse and who may have used alcohol in that context.

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes.

The researcher is not aware of any risks associated with this study. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any stage and would not have to give a reason.

All data will be anonymised as much as possible. The interview will be audio recorded (with your permission). Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any reporting of the data gathered.

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The results may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to be a participant in the study, please now see the consent form.

Contact details of the researcher

Name of researcher: Julie Young

Address: PhD Student, Sociology
School of Arts, Social Sciences & Management
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Contact details of the independent adviser not directly involved in this research.

Name of adviser: John Hughes

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Professional Interview

Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol Use

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

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Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact details of the researcher

Name of researcher: Julie Young

Address: PhD Student ,Sociology
School of Arts, Social Sciences & Management
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Appendix F: WAEML Agreement Letter

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Ms Julie Young

Undergraduate Student, Psychology & Sociology

School of Arts, Social Sciences & Management

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Queen Margaret University Drive

Musselburgh

East Lothian EH21 6UU

25 July 2014

Dear Julie,

I would like to express Women's Aid East and Midlothian's interest in principle to support your research "Domestic Abuse and the Gendered Construction of Alcohol Use". We are happy to support recruiting volunteers to participate in a Photovoice project.

I look forward to hearing about the outcome of your application process.

Best wishes,

Julia Watson

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Julie Watson Operations Manager

Appendix G: Photovoice Participant Feedback Form

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Photovoice Project 2014-2015 – Feedback & Evaluation

Thank you so much for taking part and contributing to this research project.

- It would be really useful to understand how the experience was for you.
- Please take a few minutes to capture your thoughts and feelings.
- This is completely anonymous.
- If you think of more later please feel free to e-mail me on jyoung@qmu.ac.uk

What was good about it?

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What was not so good / could have been better?

Did you get anything positive from the experience?

Would you recommend other women to take part in any future Photovoice projects?

How did you feel seeing the photos being exhibited publicly at the recent SMILE event?

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Appendix H: Photos of Exhibition at QMU November 2015



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End of Appendices